STREET & SMITH'S
# LOVE STORY
EVERY WEEK MAGAZINE APR. 25, 1931
ILLUSTRATED
15¢
20¢ IN CANADA

## The WAY OF HER HEART

MODEST STEIN

April 25 ★ STREET & SMITH'S LOVE STORY MAGAZINE 15¢

# I'll *Show You a Quick Way to Get Money to* Pay Your Bills

**"VAN"** the men who is loved by thousands who have used his almost magical plan to get money to pay their bills.

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## Money Comes Quick

Money comes quick this way. If you are in debt today or need money for food or clothes or rent or for any other bills here is the quickest way I know of for you

## and have a STEADY INCOME the rest of your life

to get as much as you need. I send you a plan by which you either make $15 cash the very first day you work for me, or else I pay you cash for the time it took you to try.

## Either Man or Woman

Doesn't make any difference about your age or whether you are a man or woman. Both have made lots of money with me. All that I ask is that you will be honest with me with the merchandise I send you—that you be ambitious enough to deliver the little message I send to people in your locality and mail me their trial orders. The products are high grade everyday necessities—used in every home—such as teas, spices, extracts, groceries—things people must have to live.

## Your Groceries at Wholesale

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**$1,457 in Prizes**

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**Big Money in Spare Time**

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## 3. I Give You 20 Magic Words and Other Instructions

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## 4. Then if you Don't Make $15 Cash the Very First Day I Will Pay You a Cash Penalty for your Time

## AND I go one step further—for I let you give credit to your customers and give you a part of every dollar we take in.

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Mail this coupon tonight—right now—I'll answer right away. I'll send my big portfolio and tell you exactly what to do to have money in your pocket next week. Remember I don't send anything C.O.D. It won't cost you a penny now or any other time to get my plan. This is an opportunity that may not come again soon as your territory may be taken up any day. But if you want to get into the big money class at once on my wonderful new plan, write your name in the coupon now and mail it to me at once.

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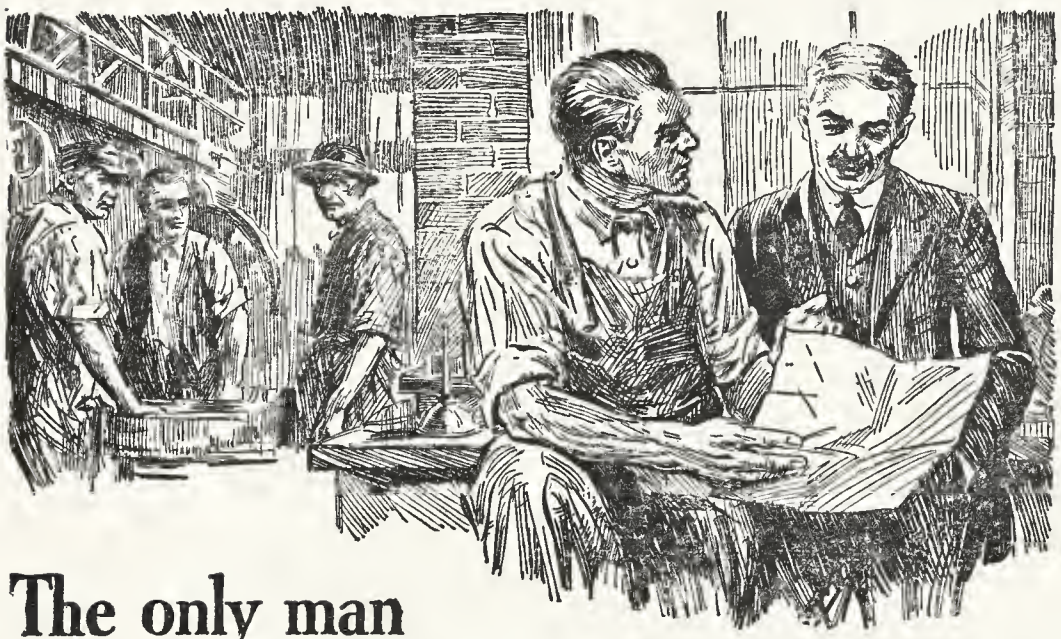

# The only man who could talk to the Superintendent

FOR several years, he was just like a score of other men in the plant—a good, honest, fairly capable worker, but only that. There was nothing distinctive about him or his ability—nothing to make him stand out from the crowd—no reason, as a matter of fact, why he should ever receive a raise in salary.

Then one fortunate day he decided that the reason he wasn't getting anywhere was because he lacked special training. He searched around a bit—asked a great many questions—and then enrolled for a home-study course with the International Correspondence Schools.

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LS—1E

# STREET & SMITH'S LOVE STORY MAGAZINE

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Beginning in next week's issue—"Delayed Ecstasy," by Margaret Littell. A serial of love and adventure in America and on the continent.

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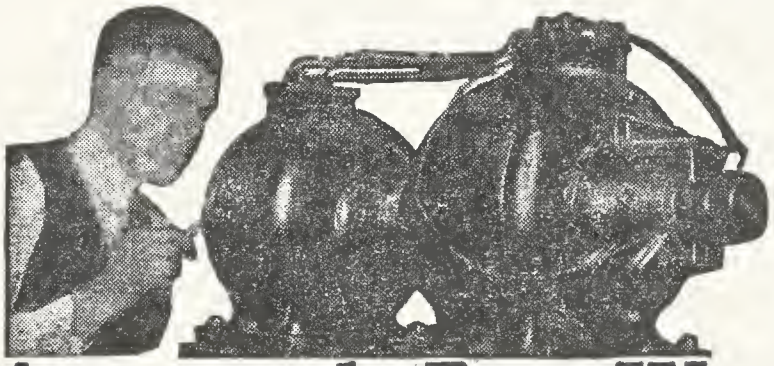

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etc., etc. That's a glimpse of how we make you a master practical electrician in 90 days, teaching you far more than the average ordinary electrician ever knows and fitting you to step into jobs leading to big pay immediately after graduation. Here, in this world-famous *Parent school*—and now here else in the world—can you get this training!

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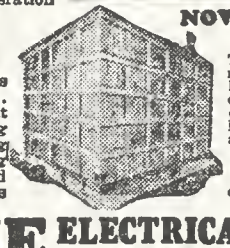

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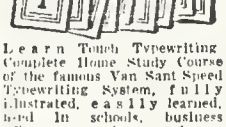

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"Dancing Partner" might be a fairy story, glamorous, fantastic, unreal, did it not give the sense to the reader that Lolita, glove clerk by day and taxi dancer by night, was the very sort of girl that he might well meet around the next corner.

Lolita, looking up into the handsome eyes of aristocratic Phil Nearing, fell suddenly and hopelessly in love with the owner of those eyes, and from then on her life became complicated. There were those who would bar the gate to her entrance to that world of wealth and fashion through which Phil Nearing walked so confidently. Out of a clear sky the false accusation of theft was made against her. She felt desolate, an outcast, and the cruelty of the world cut deep. And then just as suddenly there came a turn in events that brought the gold of sunshine into the blackness that covered Lolita's soul.

Vivian Grey, shrewd, sympathetic observer of youth, wise interpreter of the modern, you have done it again in this altogether fascinating novel.

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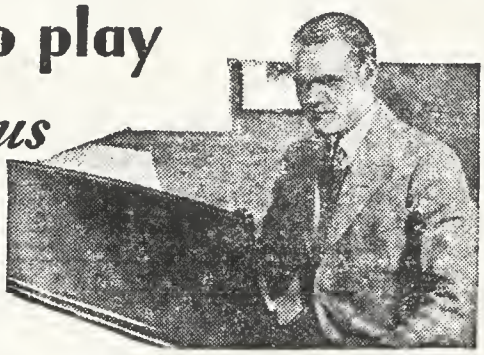
# Those who laughed loudest

## when I started to play

## ...were the most curious when I finished



"HAIL! HAIL! THE GANG'S ALL HERE"

"Sure the gang's all here," moaned Iris, "but Ken Davis forgot to bring his music and he can't play a note without it."

"I'm dreadfully sorry, Iris," said Ken. "It was just stupidness on my part."

"Ah, what's the difference," I intruded. "If we're lucky we'll get some good dance music on the radio."

"The radio," said Iris dejectedly, "thnt's out too, Tom. Fnther ordered n new set and it's already two days overdue. There goes all my visions of a good party up in smoke."

"Cheer up," I said. "I'll play the old school songs and a few dance numbers."

"I know you don't know one note from another," said Iris, "but please try and keep the pnrty in good humor."

I started to open the piano. Before I even had a chance to sit down, the wise cracks began. "Hey! What are you going to do—tune the piano?" said one of the boys.

"No, Brother, I'm going to play if you have no objections."

By this time the room rocked with laughter . . . giggles . . . hoots. "You play! That's rich," roared Ken.

### A Dramatic Surprise

Solemnly a voice interrupted, "Sir, we do hereby appoint you musical director of this gathering. While you go through the motions of playing, we'll sing our famous Marching Song."

Go through the motions! What a ripe time for my little surprise. With much gusto I struck the introductory chords of the famous "Stein Song."

Suddenly the laugh bombardment was silenced. One by one they moved closer to the piano—curiosity written all over their faces. Funny, too, the ones who had laughed loudest, were the most inquisitive. "So, Tom, you've been taking lessons on the sly from one of the teachers at the conservatory," said Ken.

"You're wrong—I learned to play by mail," I said proudly.

"Without a teacher you mean?" asked Iris.

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Then I told them all about this famous course—how I set my own study periods and played real tunes *by note* right from the very start—how the clear and simple print and picture instructions kept me from making mistakes—how in almost no time, I could play any kind of selections—jazz or classical.

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**You can share** in great advertising campaign. Over $5,000.00 in 140 Prizes. Also thousands of dollars in special rewards. C. H. Essig, a farmer, Argos, Ind. won $3,500; Mrs. Edna Zller of Ky. won $1,950; and scores of others. Now better than ever. In our new campaign **someone** wins $2,500—**why not you?** Enter now—

## Can You Find 5 Faces?

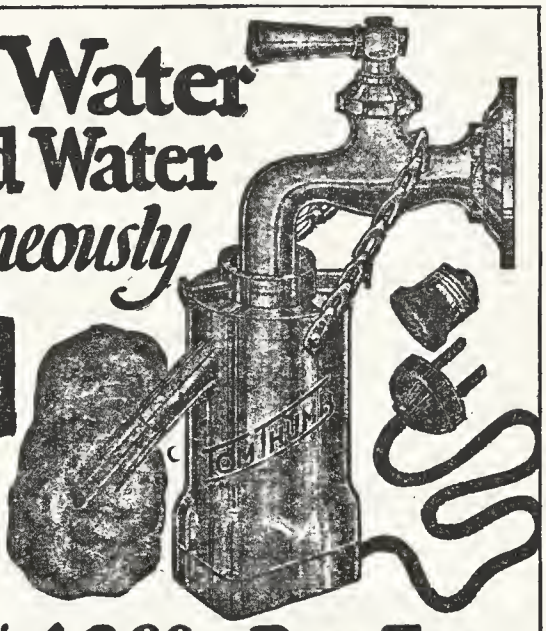
Strange faces are in tree, clouds etc. Some are upside down, others look straight at you. **If you find 5 or more faces,** mark them, clip the picture and mail. If you answer now, and take an active part, **you are sure to get a special cash reward.** You may win Buick Sedan, and $1,000 for promptness—or $2,500 if you prefer all cash. Mail answer today.

**$1,000 for Promptness**
If you are prompt I'll give $1,000 extra if you win first prize. Answer today!

## Send Today

Someone answering wins Buick Sedan delivered by nearest dealer. Duplicate prizes in case of ties. No matter where you live, if you want to win $2,500 first prize money, **send answer today** for details. Can you find 5 or more faces? **Send no money. Alan Grant, Mgr. 549 Washington Blvd., Dept. 47, Chicago**

# Running Hot Water From Your Cold Water Faucet *Instantaneously*




## Only $3.75 Complete

## *Agents! This Marvelous Invention Will Make Up to $40.00 a Day Easy*

KITCHEN

SHAVING

BATH

DOCTOR

FACTORY

**Just plug in at the nearest electric outlet and presto!—you have instantaneous, continuous running hot water from your cold water faucet. This tells you in a nutshell why the invention of the Tom Thumb automatic electric hot water heater will make it easy for you to make up to $40.00 a day.**

**The electric heated steaming hot water comes direct from the faucet instantaneously—yes, as quickly as you can turn on the current and the hot water runs indefinitely until you shut off the electricity. The cost is small—convenience is great. Useful wherever hot water is needed—no fuss or bother—attached to any faucet in a jiffy. Works on either AC or DC current. You and your customers will marvel and be delighted at this new discovery of electrical science. The small cost of $3.75 for the Tom Thumb, Junior (110 volts) or $5.75 for Tom Thumb, Senior (220 volts) does the work of any expensive hot water heating equipment costing several hundred dollars—the Tom Thumb absolutely eliminates the plumber or any other additional expense.**

## No Installation - Stick One On Faucet and Sale Is Made

**Think of it! no installation, no extra expense—nothing else to do but to stick it on the faucet, turn on electricity and it is there ready for duty. Easily removed when not wanted and easily carried to any part of house where cold water is running and hot water is wanted. Has many uses—too numerable to mention here. Weighs only 1 lb., made entirely of aluminum. Cannot rust, no moving parts, nothing to get out of order.**

## If $40 A Day Sounds Good To You Rush Coupon

**This new scientific invention offers tremendous sales possibilities. At the low price of $3.75 you should be able to sell at least forty a day. You pocket $1.00 cash commission on every sale. If you would like to know all about this proposition, sign your name and address to coupon or, better still, get started selling at once. Attach money order for $2.75 to coupon and rush to us. We will send complete selling outfit containing 1 Tom Thumb electric hot water heater, order blanks, selling particulars and everything necessary to help you get started making up to $40.00 a day at once.**

**Terminal Products Co., Inc.**
**Dept. 1504, 200 Hudson St.,**
**New York, N. Y.**

**The Tom Thumb electric hot water heater looks like a big money maker to me. I am sure interested in knowing how to make up to $40.00 a day with this proposition. I have checked below the proposition I am interested in at this moment.**

☐ **Enclosed find money order for $2.75. Please send me one Tom Thumb Junior, order blanks and selling information. It is understood upon receipt of this sample outfit I will be permitted to take orders and collect $1.00 cash deposit for every Tom Thumb, Jr. I sell, or $1.50 for every Tom Thumb, Sr. I sell. It is understood I will send the orders to you and you will ship direct to my customers C.O.D. for the balance.**

☐ **I would like to have additional information before acting as one of your agents. Please send this by return mail free of obligation.**

**Name** .....

**Street** .....

**City** ..... **State** .....

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| 30x4.95-21" | 2.90 | 1.35 | 32x4 | 2.95 | 1.15 |
| 30x5.00-20" | 2.95 | 1.35 | 33x4 | 2.95 | 1.15 |
| 28x5.25-18" | 2.95 | 1.35 | 34x4 | 3.60 | 1.15 |
| 30x5.25-20" | 2.95 | 1.35 | 32x4½ | 3.20 | 1.45 |
| 31x5.25-21" | 3.20 | 1.35 | 33x4½ | 3.20 | 1.45 |
| 30x5.77-20" | 3.20 | 1.40 | 34x4½ | 3.45 | 1.45 |
| 31x6.00-19" | 3.20 | 1.40 | 30x5 | 3.60 | 1.75 |
| 32x6.00-20" | 3.20 | 1.40 | 33x5 | 3.60 | 1.75 |
| 33x6.00-21" | 3.20 | 1.45 | 35x5 | 4.45 | 1.75 |
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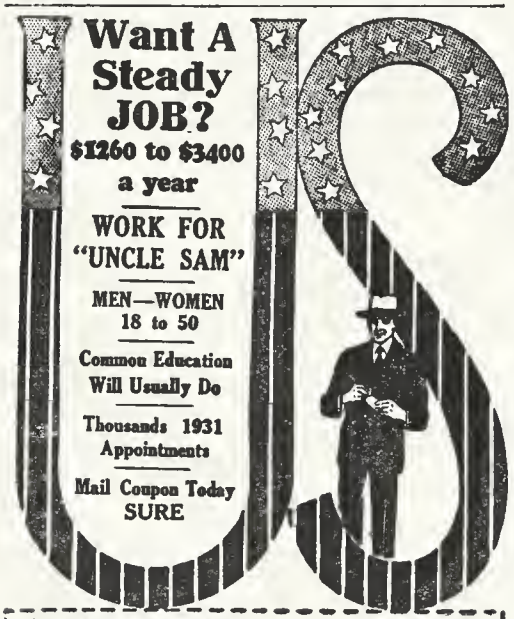

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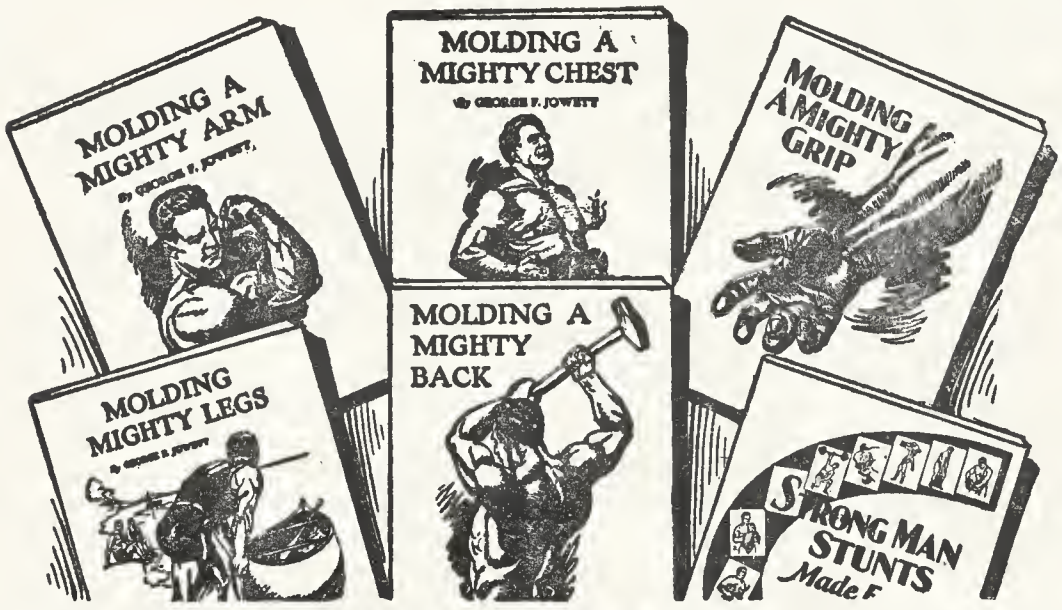
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## The Dancer in the Shadow

**By MARY FRANCES DONER**

THE music stole through the dimness of the studio and there came the dancing figure of Ursula Royle, the daughter of a proud old family, who could snatch away men's senses by the sheer magic of her art. They called her dance "The Moth and the Flame," and to her flame there came the moth, Glenn Mortimer, one of her own people, aristocratic, sophisticated, madly in love with the beautiful girl.

But there was still another moth, whose wings had carried him into an atmosphere far different from that which surrounded Ursula and Glenn. This was Andrew Cameron, the vaudeville singer. He, too, loved Ursula, and for his sake she left the luxuries of her Washington Square home to take up with Andrew the fantastic life of the road.

And then there came into their lives adventure that carries the reader along in breathless pace to the thrilling climax.

"The Dancer in the Shadow" is a story of New York of not so long ago and of love and of high romance with a quality about it which is indeed distinguished.

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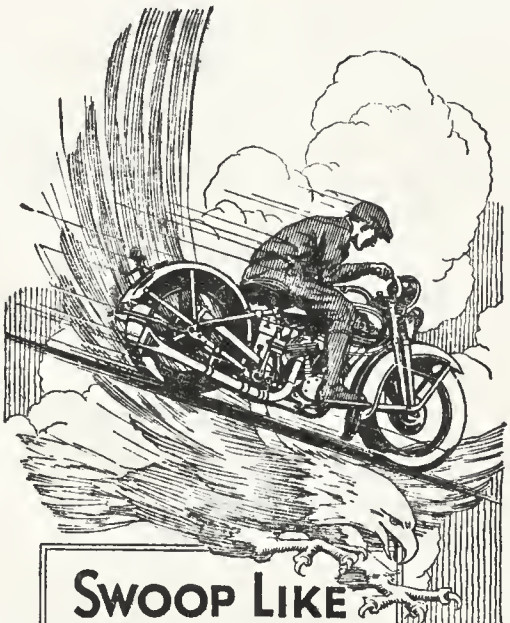

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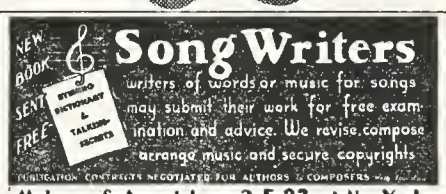
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**By ELLEN HOGUE**

HE could ride, this Tom Jenison, this rather pallid, hollow-eyed nonentity in circus business, canvas slapper, man of mystery. That lean, long body was fluid as the liquid lightning it bestrode, reared and leaped with the lightning, thought with the brain of it and always one split second ahead of the murderous brute mind."

The story of how Jenison rode the wicked stallion Killer Boy, while the girl he loved looked on with agony in her beautiful eyes, is the smashing climax of a novel of circus life which keeps you as much on edge as that great riding kept its spectators breathless.

Under the Big Top of the circus, a fantastic world—"world of the ballyhoo, the shillaber; of hot dogs and popcorn and water-thin lemonade; of horseflesh and grease paint, of glitter and pomp; elephants that served a king in India; a mangy lion born in the Bronx zoo; stray dogs, stray boys, wives, sweethearts, bad men, good men, weak men, brave men, beggar men, thieves."

Such is the world which Milly the daughter of the circus and the heroine of this colorful novel adorned and reigned over. Ellen Hogue knows it so intimately and loves it so well that she makes it come to vibrant life before your eyes. Read "Hearts of the Big Top" if you want thrills in your fiction, thrills mingled with a most touching love story.

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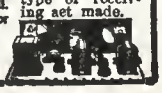

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*(From the Boston Post, May 26, 1930)*

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In making this move, the cut-price publishers take the ground that mass production will reduce their costs and that the greater volume of sales will bring a reasonable profit.

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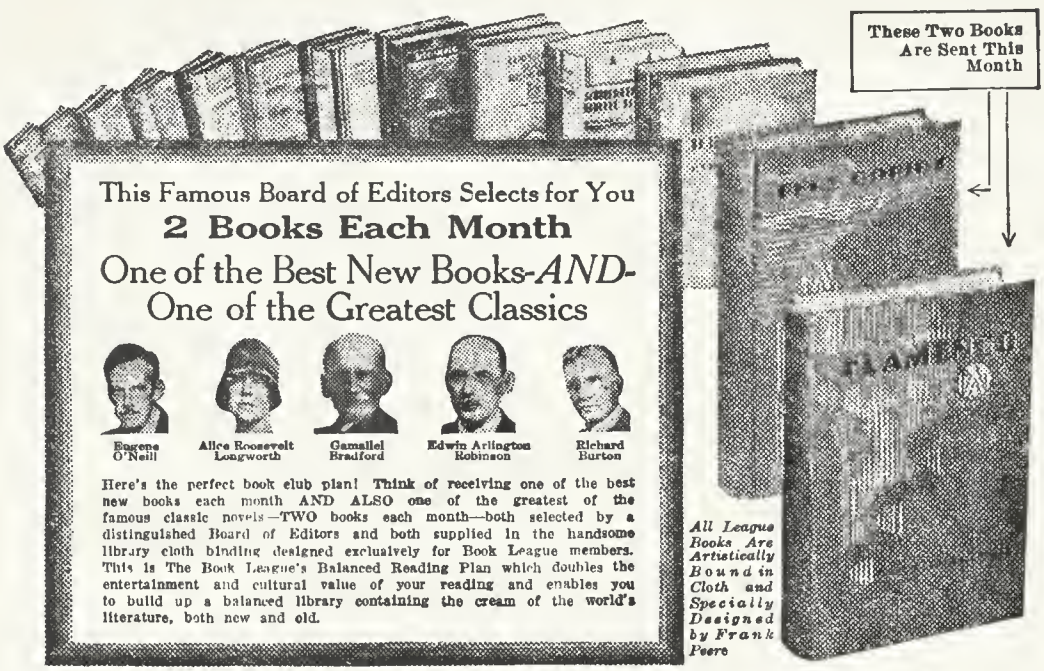
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# Love Up!

## By Ethel Le Compte

THOUGH fully grown, they were small, all four of them—Lucinda, the girl; Ray, the boy; Suretogo, the filly, and Pert, the cat.

"Little bit of somebodies, but Heaben done give 'em mighty big hearts fo' lovin' an' fo' bein' broken an' fo' bein' kind to all de world," was how one of the Negroes at the Leslie stables put it, and was answered by a hearty confirmation from all the others.

When Lucinda was only a few hours old, her young mother had whispered to her elderly husband: "Call her Lucinda for she was born at daybreak. Don't blame her because I had to—leave you both. Love her and make her happy, dear."

Colonel Leslie did his best to do as his wife had asked. Until the child was six she ran wild on the great estate in Virginia, spoiled by her father, her mother's brother, Hal Cavel, and a small army of Negroes. Then she was sent away to school. The summer she was eight, she came home for her vacation to find a newcomer there.

He was Ray, son of one of the best jockeys the colonel had ever had. For two years Sam Wirth had lain in a plaster cast as the result of a fall from Princess Pat. Dying, he had intrusted his motherless son to the colonel, who had promised to bring him up to follow in his father's footsteps if he inherited his father's small stature and talent for riding.

Ray was two years older than Lucinda, and at ten a potential jockey. The little girl was delighted with her new playmate, and he worshiped the willful, imperious child who had inherited her mother's dark beauty and her father's dark temper. Lucinda thought Ray's red hair, freckles, and twinkling blue eyes far nicer than anything in all the world. For four wonderful summers

the two played together; then for four long years they were separated. Instead of spending her vacations at home, Lucinda spent them abroad with her father's unmarried sister, Editha.

Lucinda, sixteen but looking twelve, arrived home the very day Suretogo was born. Colonel Leslie, in common with every one on the estate, had only one thought that day, and that was for Princess Pat and her foal, so that when Lucinda talked he scarcely knew what she was saying.

Later, he found out that he had given his consent to her leaving school altogether and "staying home with you, daddy, forever and ever." Of course he blustered a bit, but was pleased to have her with him. Her wanting to be home flattered him, and he was more than delighted with her appreciation of the new filly.

He had taken her into the stable, and she had caressed Princess Pat, then knelt before the tiny foal and kissed its velvet nose.

"With such parents you'll be a wonder," she whispered. Then, standing up: "Call her Suretogo, daddy. She's sure to go if she's a Leslie horse, for your horses are always in the money."

"And I'm always out of money," added the colonel ruefully.

"Of course you are, daddy, when you spend fortunes on my education and trips to Europe. From now on, we shan't need any money."

Her father laughed, caught her up in his arms, kissed her, and lifted her up on a stall partition. Keeping his arms around her slim waist, he declared: "I suppose you'll be losing your heart to some lucky gentleman of Virginia soon, and getting married."

Slender arms about his neck, warm lips against his weathered cheek softened his daughter's accusation: "Daddy, you don't love your child at all. Ten years away to school, and the first thing you do is talk of marrying me off——"

"Honey, how you talk," the colonel cut in. "I was merely speculating about a dim and distant future. Until then, we'll be inseparable, and—what are you craning your pretty neck for, honey?"

"Carry me across to the next stall," Lucinda ordered softly. "Now peek over the top. Oh, daddy, isn't it too wonderful? On the very day I come home, Suretogo is born and we find a batch of kittens!" She sighed ecstatically. "Oh, how many are there?" she asked the boy who had come tiptoeing in with milk.

"Only two, Miss Lucinda," answered a muffled voice, "but they're mighty cute." He tenderly picked up a kitten and put it into Lucinda's cupped hands, not knowing it was destined to be the fourth of their band.

"It's no bigger than my powder puff, and just as soft and white," said the girl, brushing her lips across the animal's silky fur. Her throat tightened and she felt the sting of tears in her eyes as she had done when she first touched Suretogo.

"Have you named it and its twin, too?" teased her father.

"No, I'll have to wait until their personalities develop." She gave the kitten back to the boy. "Lift me down, dad," she said. Then, in a lower tone: "Wasn't that Ray Wirth?"

"Of course. I thought you were high-hatting him now that you're a young lady and have been to Europe."

"Parent, you thought no such thing, and I'm not a young lady!"

Out of the door she dashed and down the gravel path after the small figure in riding breeches. "Ray!" she called. "Ray, wait!"

He swung about, jerked up his head, and regarded her with searching eyes. Lucinda's soft red lips curved into a smile, and she thrust her small hand out eagerly. "It was so dark in there——" Her explanation trailed off.

"And it's been four years and nine

months since"—Ray swallowed hard and went on—"since we rode postilion that last morning. You're a young lady now, Miss Lucinda."

Lucinda stamped a tiny foot. "Miss Lucinda," she mimicked. "And I refuse to be a young lady, and the next one who calls me that——"

"You're still powerful small," Ray consoled her hastily.

"So are you, Ray. Aren't you glad? I do think you'll have your wish and be a jockey."

Again Ray swallowed hard. "You didn't forget in all this long time," he marveled softly, his blue eyes misted.

"Forget! I prayed it every day, just as we used to. The next best thing to being a boy myself is having you, my best friend, wear the Leslie colors." Her big dark eyes blazed suddenly. "Ray, in two years you'll be twenty and through going to school, and then you'll be a real jockey, and right then Suretogo will be ready, too!"

Ray's small, freckled face, under the thatch of sandy hair, was transfigured and his blue eyes shone. "To wear the orange-and-red!" he cried. "It's worth everything!"

Lucinda's exquisite, heart-shaped face was as glorified as the boy's and her great dark eyes as rapt. A Mona Lisa smile lingered on her lips. "You will, Ray, it's an omen! The very day I come back to stay forever and ever, Suretogo is born, born for you to ride, born to win for us, Ray-ray-racy!"

"Lucinda!" breathed Ray. "The old nickname. When the filly is two, we'll both be ready to beat the world, Lucincindah!"

It was not until Lucinda was crossing the smooth lawn toward the house that she recalled her father's remark about her marrying. She frowned and shook her little curly head. Then she laughed at the thought. "Lucin-cindah," the wild colt, married! Not for years and years and years! They'd kept her in harness at school long enough. Now that she was free, free she would stay. With a little cry of sheer joy, she leaped into the air, her thin legs kicking madly. Then they carried her up the broad, shallow steps, across the wide gallery of the big white house, and over the dark polished floors to the sunny kitchen.

"Magnolia," cried the owner of the flashing legs, "I'm going to stay home forever and ever! Give me some of that sweet 'tater pie."

Within the hour every Negro in the house, in the stables, or on the grounds knew the good news.

And Lucinda stayed at home for two long golden years.

Lucinda, at eighteen, was just four feet eleven and weighed ninety-two pounds. Her beauty made her the toast of Virginia, and brought to her feet some of the finest young men of that State. But eighteen, Lucinda had not lost her love of freedom, and she was heart-whole and fancy-free—so she fondly thought.

Ray, at twenty, was five feet two, and one hundred and five pounds in the saddle, which was where he had spent most of the daylight hours during the last two years. According to Colonel Leslie, the boy was his father over again and then some. His erect bearing, his grace, his manliness combined to make him appear at an advantage even when in the company of the tall young men who freqented the Leslie place. He was not handsome, but his face was pleasing with its keen blue eyes, firm mouth and chin, and frank, open expression.

Suretogo, at two, was as swift and conscientious a filly as ever flashed in a winner. She was small, slender, with aristocratic lines, melting brown eyes, and a shining chestnut coat. From her sire, Black Knight, she had inherited speed and courage, from her dam, a gallant heart and more speed, from both, temperament plus. Her peculiarities—

"notions" the Negroes called them, and they were many—were her own.

She was quiet at the start, but after winning—and she had won every race she had entered, beginning with the Lexington Baby Stakes—it took all hands to manage her. After she had been bandaged, cooled, and laid away, she had to be soothed. To soothe her it took several things—Lucinda to caress her, Ray to "spank" her, and Pert, the surviving kitten of the two born on the filly's birthday, to snuggle close to her.

Pert was only a tiny scrap—a bit of white fluff with one blue eye and one yellow one—but she was all the world to the filly.

Colonel Leslie adored his daughter, thought Ray the finest boy and the greatest jockey living, knew that Suretogo was the best little piece of horseflesh in all the world, and had given his heretofore cat-proof heart into the keeping of the small Pert.

"I've named her Pert, daddy, because she's just that, even to you," his daughter had told him when the kitten was a few weeks old.

No one but Ray and Lucinda had ever put a leg over Suretogo, and the filly didn't know that such things as whips existed. She led a happy, contented home life, and race days were the high spots for her. Winning, she danced and whimpered shrilly with equine ecstasy. Still, she had her unhappy hours when Pert was too busy mothering kittens to fuss with her devoted friend. Suretogo all but starved herself until Pert grew tired of her babies.

When Suretogo went to Kentucky or Maryland to race, Pert went in the special motor van with her, just as sure as Ray, her trainer, and several stableboys did. The daughter of Princess Pat traveled in luxury. Her luxurious car trailed Colonel Leslie's automobile, which was driven by Lucinda, so that at a moment's notice every one the filly loved could be with her. Colonel Leslie, hating cars, used them instead of the railroad merely to be near Suretogo.

"What," Lucinda asked him one day, "will you do when we take her to the tracks by plane? You'll have to fly, too, daddy."

"Me fly!" exploded the colonel. "Never! We were never meant to fly. Here and now I take solemn oath never to fly!"

Lucinda turned to the third member of the party.

"You hear that, Uncle Hal?" she cried. "When I elope, I'll fly, for I know daddy can't follow me."

Hal Cavel was the only one who held onto the money he won on Suretogo. The golden harvest slipped through the colonel's fingers as every other golden harvest had, but his brother-in-law did the wise thing. For eighteen years he had nursed along the tiny fortune his sister had given to him for her baby. When he realized that the little golden filly was a sure winner, he decided to get some quick returns for his niece. Using only the money he had made for her, not a cent of the capital, he had now in the bank a tidy instead of a tiny fortune, and with each race Suretogo won, it grew. That was Uncle Hal's pleasant secret.

When she was twenty, Lucinda would have it all. When he died, she would inherit his fine home, the ground of which adjoined the Leslie estate, for he had never married and now never would.

During those two happy years, Lucinda and Ray were together most of the waking hours, but their old relationship —that of best friends—was maintained. Lucinda thought Ray a marvel both as friend and jockey. Life without Ray? Well, it just wouldn't be life!

Ray had worshiped the exquisite girl ever since he had come to the Leslie home. At twenty, his blue eyes betrayed his love for her, although he hardly recognized the emotion for what it was.

Then one lovely April morning the revelation came to both.

Ray, stop watch in hand, was perched atop the rail watching Suretogo with Lucinda up working six furlongs. "Whew!" he gasped. "One fourteen and a fifth!"

He repeated the time to Lucinda as she came into the stable yard, and rewarded the filly with a spank. Elated, Suretogo reared and pawed the air, just as her rider was dismounting. It happened so quickly that neither Lucinda nor Ray could prepare—that is, prepare for the revelation; they were always prepared for anything to do with quick action. To save Lucinda from what might be a tumble, Ray leaped and caught her in his arms, his face pale at the mere thought of harm to her.

"Lucinda!" he cried in terror. Then, holding her safe against his pounding heart: "Lucinda!" His arms tightened about her, instead of setting her on the ground.

Lucinda turned her head until her eyes looked into his.

"Why, Ray!" she breathed. "Ray, we—love—each other!"

"Reckon we always have, honey," he whispered.

The bright head bent lower over the dark one. They kissed.

Then they laughed softly and Lucinda slid to the ground. His arm still about her, Ray caught her strong little hands to his lips. Everything was forgotten but their love, so new and yet so old.

"Oh, how dear, how utterly sweet she is!" he thought. "How I love her! Can I ever be worthy of her?"

And Lucinda was thinking: "Ah, dear Heaven, how dear, how wonderful he is! How I love him!"

They smiled into each other's eyes.

*"Call her Suretogo, daddy. She's sure to go if she's a Leslie horse, for your horses are always in the money."*

They sighed. They kissed. They were lost in the sweetest dream life has to give—first love.

Suretogo, as if understanding, nickered softly and nuzzled them with her white plush nose. She was drawn into the magic circle by loving arms.

Two stableboys ran out, their eyes shining in their black faces, one carrying Pert. Again the filly nickered as she nosed the cat.

"She's telling our secret," whispered Lucinda as they walked away.

After they were out of sight and earshot of those in the avenue of stalls, Ray stopped and turned to face Lucinda. Only five feet two, but every inch a man, he gazed at her warmly.

"Your father," he began, "Colonel Leslie, will never consent to our marriage, Lucinda."

The girl laughed softly and lifted her piquant face for his kiss. "Do you," she asked, "really love me?"

His head jerked up in its characteristic way, and his eyes narrowed. "Love you! I worship you!"

"And I love you, Ray, so why worry about dad? Anyway, he always does as I want him to do, gives me whatever I ask for. He wants me to have what I want to make me happy, and I've never wanted anything as I want you, and nothing has ever made me as happy as having you will make me, precious," she told him breathlessly.

"Sweetheart! Kiss me! Wonderful little love, kiss me!"

"Darling boy!"

"You love your darling boy?"

"With all my heart!"

"Beautiful you! Wonderful you!"

In the enchantment of their kisses, they forgot Colonel Leslie. They forgot time. They wanted nothing but to stay as they were in this blissful love dream, enjoying the magic of encircling arms, of kisses, of softly spoken love names. Freely, equally, candidly they yielded their hearts each to the other.

It was Aunt Editha, on a visit to her brother, who first noticed that her niece and the youthful jockey were in love. She lost no time in telling the colonel of her discovery.

"I should never have trusted the girl with you," she flung at the utterly unprepared man. "You're not only criminally careless but absolutely blind." She turned on Hal Cavel, lazily sipping a mint julep. "And you! Have you ever done anything for your sister's child except spoil her?"

Hal chuckled, thinking of his secret. "I've loved her," he defended himself. "We both have, and so has every one else. What's biting you, Miss Editha?"

"We both have, and so has ever one else!" mimicked Miss Editha. "That's just what is biting me, as you so elegantly phrase it." She turned to the other man. "Robert Leslie, your daughter and your jockey are in love with each other!"

The two elderly men turned their fine old heads and grinned at each other. Hal winked delightedly. Colonel Leslie shouted with laughter.

"Wonderful imagination the lady has!" said Hal to the colonel.

Unruffled, Editha went on: "I don't blame the children. What could they do but fall in love? They're both so young and good to look at, together all the time unwatched. They have the same interests and—here comes Lucinda now. Her face betrays her secret. Look at the child!"

They looked and saw a girl, young, lovely, and dewy as a rosebud, a girl with smiling lips and serious eyes, one who loved and was loved; hence lived in a dream.

"It may be some one else," Colonel Leslie muttered to Editha. "Young Lee or Cathrop. They come here often enough."

But Editha shook her head. "It's Ray," she said softly.

As Lucinda lifted her rapturous face

for his kiss, the colonel's thought flashed back to the day that he had kissed Betty Lou Cavel for the first time, and his heart grew tender. In his heart he whispered: "Betty Lou, help me and help her."

But when Lucinda frankly and joyously acknowledged her love for Ray, his tenderness vanished and his rage flamed against the boy.

"The snake in the grass!" he exploded. "He owes everything to me, and repays it by stealing my daughter! Never——"

"He didn't steal me," Lucinda explained with new dignity. "At the exact same moment we found out that we loved each other. We told each other. We kissed. It wasn't Ray telling me, Ray kissing me, but each telling the other, each kissing the other."

"But neither being honorable enough to come to me and tell me!"

Rich color dyed Lucinda's face. The Leslie temper sharpened her tongue. "It wasn't that. How could you think it was? Ray wanted to wait until he earned enough to support me, and——"

"Support you!" cried the colonel.

"Support you!" cried Uncle Hal.

Both spoke angrily, but for different reasons.

The colonel went on: "A Leslie lady is not supported as if she were——"

The other man cut in: "If you paid Ray the salary he earns, he could easily support a wife and do it well!"

For a breathless second the colonel stared at his brother-in-law in silence; then a terrible oath broke from his pallid lips. Miss Editha cringed and screamed, but Lucinda stood unmoved.

"Leave this house, Cavel," barked Colonel Leslie. "Never dare——"

"Daddy!" Lucinda's bravery deserted her. "Daddy, what are you saying? I couldn't live without Uncle Hal, and he——"

"Then you can live without me!" burst out her father.

"Robert!" protested Editha.

For the first time in Lucinda's memory, Hal Cavel's round, ruddy face looked white and woebegone. "Don't look like that, Uncle Hal," she whimpered. "Daddy, please take that back."

"There, there, honey," soothed her uncle. "Bob, old man, don't let us quarrel," he pleaded. The stout little man got up and stood in front of his tall, lean brother-in-law.

"I," stated the colonel heavily, "am not quarreling. I am asking you to leave my house forever, sir."

Editha collapsed in a chair to weep. Hal Cavel pursed his lips, regarded the other man levelly, then turned on his heel.

Lucinda caught him at the doorway. "You know he doesn't mean it," she whispered. "Uncle Hal, you will come back when he——"

"I always have, haven't I, dear? Sometimes I think we've spoiled him, always giving in. But for your sweet sake, I will again."

"You lamb!" Lucinda kissed him, then asked softly: "Could Ray earn lots of money riding?"

Before Hal could answer, Colonel Leslie thundered: "Come here to me, Lucinda. You are never to speak to that man again!"

Lucinda swallowed hard and flung pleading arms out to her father.

"In that case," observed Hal Cavel calmly, "I'll have to tell you something, Lucinda. Your Aunt Editha accused me of never doing anything for you but spoil you. No one could do that to you, honey. Let it go, though. Besides loving you, child, I've built up the small inheritance my sister left you until now it is a fortune worthy of even a Leslie lady." He looked straight at his brother-in-law. "Ray is a fine boy, Lucinda, and capable of taking care of you. My home is open to either or both of you at any time. I——"

In a terrible voice, Colonel Leslie cut

in: "If you do not go, Cavel, I shall not be answerable for what I may do."

"Then I shall go by all means," returned the other with a grin. "Good-by, ladies." He blew Lucinda a kiss, but she was too busy pleading with her father to see it.

"Ray has been with us for eleven years," she was saying. "Have you ever known him to do anything mean or dishonest? Hasn't he been devoted to you? Hasn't he gloried in wearing the orange-and-red? He——"

"Go to your room!" burst out her father.

Lucinda turned away. Later she would try to make him understand. It was useless to try when he was in one of his rages. As she went, her father's voice followed her. "You are not to go out to see that young ingrate. Editha, you'd better go to watch——"

"Daddy!" Lucinda's voice was as furious as her father's had been when he had ordered her uncle out of the house.

Colonel Leslie stared at his daughter. Eye to eye, they stood for a long moment. "Go alone then," her father capitulated.

As she reached the stairs, Lucinda heard her Aunt Editha say: "Did you think I was a watchdog, Robert?" And her father replied: "I'm ashamed, Editha."

To-morrow, Lucinda comforted herself, would find daddy over his fury, and ready to listen to reason.

Again her father's voice came to her. "Puppy love! They——"

"Puppy love!" Aunt Editha's voice, sharp yet sad. "Once you called my love—mine and Clay's—puppy love, Robert. That was forty years ago, but that love was the only love of my life. You ruined our lives, but times have changed and girls do not allow——"

"Enough!" cut in her brother.

"And I have changed," went on the elderly woman steadily. "When I warned you that Lucinda loved a jockey, I thought only of the great Leslie name —Heaven knows I've heard enough about it all my life to be forgiven that. But now—now that I've seen her face as she spoke of their love, heard her voice, I am convinced that it is true love. Oh, Robert, how frank and how proud she is! I——"

"Stop! You're all against me, all of you! My daughter, my sister, Hal, my friend, my Betty Lou's brother! That boy——"

"That boy! You brought him here, Robert, treated him as a son, let him go to the best schools, let him live here and play with Lucinda. You thought him good enough for all that, but——"

"But not good enough to marry my daughter! Edith, you, a Leslie, even to suggest such a thing! Why——"

"Yes, Robert, I was born a Leslie and am still a Leslie, and shall die a Leslie, thanks to you. Lucinda must not know the loneliness that I have known, and she won't if I can help it."

"And I?" said Colonel Leslie in a lower but still bitter voice. "Haven't I known that loneliness, too? For two years I had Betty Lou—just two short years. When she—went, she left Lucinda to me. Do you think I'll give her to the first young upstart who—oh, don't—don't ask that of me!" He drew in a great, gasping breath. "For eighteen years I have lived for—our baby and they want to turn her against me—take her from me——" His voice broke.

"Daddy!" Lucinda was across the room and kneeling at his side. His leonine head with its gray mane was bowed in his trembling hands, and great sobs shook him. At that moment it came to Lucinda that her father was old, almost feeble. Added to that shock was another even greater: her proud, strong-willed, imperious father was bowed in sorrow and she was the cause of those unmanly tears! Her heart grew cold

within her, for it seemed that her world, the pivot of which had been her father, was tumbling down about her ears, and both of them were being crushed.

For a long instant Lucinda lay under the terrifying revelation; then suddenly she grew up! She was no longer a child; she was a woman! Love had awakened her partially, but out of sorrow came the real awakening. She felt herself cease trembling as new life and courage flooded her. She stood up and threw back her head proudly. Yes, she was a woman and a Leslie!

Stooping, she gathered the shaken old man into her strong young arms and held him to her. "Daddy!" she said softly. "Daddy honey, no one can turn me against my daddy, no one can take me from him. I——" She stopped suddenly lest her newborn courage fail and she cry aloud her beloved's name. With lips that felt cold, she kissed her father's bowed head, and then as he raised his head and stared at her with burning eyes, she kissed his cheek.

Editha had slipped away, and the two were left alone to an hour of quiet, understanding talk.

Lucinda had thought, when she renounced her sweetheart for her father, that life could give no greater agony, but later as she sought Ray to tell him, she knew greater suffering. That time she was bringing sorrow to the man she loved, whereas the first time she had given peace and happiness to the one who loved her.

Ray flinched under the blow and recovered slowly. They were in the homy, sweet-smelling stable where they had known so many happy hours. Suretogo was peacefully dozing with Pert in her box in the stali. Everything was as it should have been, except that two young brave hearts were breaking and two souls were sticken.

Ray leaned against the whitewashed wall and looked with unseeing eyes at the filly's golden flank. Then his head jerked up with its characteristic movement and his blue eyes turned upon Lucinda.

"There could be no happiness for us," he said huskily, "if we let the finest man in the world down. It will take all we have to carry on, dear, but I reckon we can do it. We're young and can wait."

"Yes, Ray," Lucinda agreed eagerly "Something may make him understand, but—oh, if you had seen him break down!"

For a while they clung to each other as if death itself were waiting to part them. Between sobs, she described the scene from which she had fled to tell him that they must sacrifice their love for another's happiness.

"Did you ever think, Ray, that you could earn more money—a really large salary riding for some one else?" Lucinda asked.

"I can't imagine riding under any other colors," Ray fenced.

"Uncle Hal said that you could," Lucinda told him.

"Perhaps I could, but I shan't," Ray assured her. "Speaking of riding, next week Suretogo and I will ride the ride of our lives at Laurel. She's in fine shape."

"And she'll be carrying what's left of the Leslie cash," Lucinda told him, "as well as a hunk of Uncle Hal's fortune."

So they talked of the race and their beloved filly, but all the while their courageous hearts were aching.

The next day when Lucinda told her father that she and Ray had decided to forget love and remain the friends they had always been, the colonel regarded her thoughtfully. He thanked her with a quick, warm kiss, but made no comment. He was his old self, but Lucinda, now that her eyes had been opened, saw that he had failed physically and was far from robust. He never mentioned the matter to Ray, but talked of the

coming races as if nothing had happened.

Before she concluded her visit, Aunt Editha praised her niece for her action, but begged her to be quite sure that she was right and not to ruin her life and Ray's. Uncle Hal came and went in the big house as he always had, and made

***"Daddy!" she said softly. "Daddy honey, no one can turn me against my daddy, no one can take me from him."***

no reference to the colonel, but told Lucinda privately that she was a little fool.

The day the Leslies were to start for Laurel found Lucinda ill with a cold and sore throat. Never before, when she was at home, had she failed to go to a race, and it was with a sad heart that she heard the van with Ray, Suretogo, and the boys follow the colonel's car which Uncle Hal was driving. She was not the only one left behind. Pert had not gone either.

Lucinda spent the day of the race sitting before the radio, flanked by two of her best-loved Negroes, Magnolia and Nazarene, her daughter, on one side and Pert and four kittens on the other. At last the big event came. The announcer's voice crisply named the field and added other comment. Then the breath-taking: "They're off!" Suretogo made her usual fast get-away and led for a while, but halfway up the stretch she began to slow up, and Minto nosed out the Leslie entry at the wire.

For a moment the silence which only the announcer's voice had broken was maintained in the big room; then Lucinda burst out: "Oh, it can't be true. Suretogo beaten! Impossible!"

"But she's second, honey," soothed Magnolia. "She's still in de money, lovey."

"Not Leslie money," lamented Lucinda. "Daddy plays to win."

"Dat Suretogo hoss sick without you-all and Pert, Miss Lucinda."

The broadcast news was bad enough,

but the story that Ray telephoned was worse.

"The colonel blames me." There was a strange, new note in Ray's voice as it came over the wire. "He as good as accused me of pulling the filly. As if I would! That's harder to bear than losing, Luce. Why, I gave her a swell ride. I can't imagine what's wrong with the animal."

"She was a bit tired from her trip perhaps," Lucinda answered. "She'll be all right for the handicap Friday, Ray. I know she will."

"Of course she will. Oh, it's awful without you, Luce. How are you feeling? Lots better?"

Yes indeed. Well enough to hop over for the handicap."

"Don't you dare!" begged Ray. "Promise to be a good girl."

"I promise." returned Lucinda. "Good-by, Ray. Kiss Suretogo for me."

Presently the colonel telephoned. His news was the worst of all.

"I'm not going to let Ray ride on Friday," he announced after a few minutes' conversation. "We've spoiled that filly. She needs a lesson. I'm putting Snuffy Brown up for the handicap.

"Why don't you answer?" he demanded after a long silence.

"There is no answer," choked Lucinda. "You'll break Ray's heart—Suretogo's, too, for Brown is a stranger—and he'll whip her! Oh, daddy——"

"I guess I know what I'm doing!" burst out the colonel. "Good-by!"

"Wait!" The click of the receiver was all that answered Lucinda. For a while, she sat staring into space; then she again lifted the receiver and gave a local number. The soft drawl of Glenn Cathrop answered. Learning who his caller was, he lost the drawl. Learning the reason for her call, he let out a whoop of excitement. He had tried so often to sell the lovely Lucinda any sort of idea that meant their being together that his joy as her suggesting that they fly over to Laurel in his new airplane knew no bounds.

"I'll call for you in my car at dawn," he agreed. "It will take us ten minutes to reach the field. We'll be in Laurel in two hours."

Lucinda sought Magnolia. "Don't you think Pert's been taking care of those kittens long enough, Magnolia?" she asked.

"Sure has, Miss Lucinda," the cook answered. "They's plenty fat an' sassy. Want I should get 'em good homes?"

"That's exactly what I do want. Pert is going flying with me to Suretogo. We can't have any more slip-ups, can we?"

Magnolia's eyes rolled heavenward. "Flyin', is it? Then it'll be slip-downs instead of slip-ups. Please, honey, don't go flyin'!"

But a few minutes after dawn the following morning, Glenn Cathrop's plane took off with Lucinda, Pert, and himself as passengers.

When Colonel Leslie learned that his daughter has arrived in "one of those fool contraptions," he was furious. When Lucinda tried to calm him, he only poured fresh torrents of rage on her head.

"How dare you try to tell me who's to ride my horses?" he demanded. "Snuffy Brown is Suretogo's jockey from now on, and that's that!"

"Please, daddy, don't. The whip would break her heart!"

"Stuff and nonsense!" The colonel marched away, swearing.

Lucinda, Ray, and Uncle Hal went into conference. They talked for hours and got nowhere. Ray was exiled from the stables, but managed to slip in a few minutes with Lucinda and Pert, and watched the filly's reaction to being reunited with her friends.

Lucinda felt the tears sting her eyes as Suretogo, all aquiver, danced joyously, her eyes shining, her ears flexing.

With little neighs of ecstasy, she nuzzled each in turn.

Uncle Hal was brought in to be convinced that all that had ailed the filly was lovesickness; then he was sent to Colonel Leslie to make him see the light also. The little man hurried away eagerly, only to return crestfallen. The colonel, he reported breathlessly, had flown into one of his rages and was on his way over from the hotel. Ray had best leave while the leaving was good.

Ray did, but not before he and Lucinda had held each other close, breaking their self-imposed reserve. Lips pressed, they again pledged themselves to their love and the future.

Until the very hour of the handicap, Lucinda pleaded with her father to let Ray ride, to let her ride, to withdraw Suretogo from the race, anything to keep "Snuffy" Brown, who believed in the use of the whip and in "handling 'em rough," off the filly.

But Suretogo went to the post with Snuffy in the saddle. The jockey got her away in fine shape. For three furlongs she went well; then she began to slow up, and the boy drew his whip. The filly jumped and swerved under the first punishment she had ever known, lost her stride altogether, dashed wildly to the outer rail, and then tore like a crazed thing after the field, overtaking all but three!

Lucinda was waiting with Suretogo's handlers, sick to the heart. The filly was covered by a blanket, but her eyes were terror-stricken, and she was quivering miserably. The girl thought of other races, when it had taken all hands to keep the filly's dancing feet on the ground, and she had dragged her grooms all around the barn before she had let them minister to her. Lucinda resolved that at any cost she would make her father see how wrong he was.

She wept on the filly's neck, then on Uncle Hal's shoulder as they drove to the hotel to pick up the colonel. It was a hard, tense journey home, and Lucinda's heart was torn between wondering where Ray was and how Suretogo was standing the trip.

"I'm going to sell that worthless filly," Colonel Leslie burst out without warning.

"Daddy!" protested Lucinda. "You couldn't do that!"

"Fine!" observed Hal Cavel quietly, giving his niece a sign to be silent. "I'll take her if your price is right, Bob."

"You!" exclaimed the colonel. "Er —well, twenty thousand."

"Fifteen," offered the other.

"All right! I need some money, and I don't need that filly."

There was no chance for a private word with her uncle before they parted at the Leslie place, but Lucinda telephoned him at the first opportunity. "Have I enough to buy Suretogo?" she asked, breathlessly.

"You have. The filly is yours, honey. Now get that boy of yours and we'll all be happy again."

"All except poor daddy," lamented Lucinda.

"Diplomacy, love, and winning the next race will bring him around. Don't worry, child. I know that old fellow."

Lucinda hung up, but sat staring at the instrument as if that would compel Ray to call her. Hours of alternate hope and despair passed before he did. Excitedly, Lucinda told him the good news, and he agreed to take the first train and report to her uncle.

During the weeks that followed, Colonel Leslie made things very difficult for his daughter. He demanded almost constant attention, and it was seldom that she could steal away to meet Ray on the road with Suretogo or at the Cavel stables. They made the most of the precious moments together, and the filly showed her delight, but it was obvious that she was not herself.

She missed her own stall, Pert, and

the happy atmosphere, the gay songs of her two idols. Ray and Lucinda got another white cat for Suretogo, but she would have none of it. The colonel had brought Pert into the house to live, so she could not be borrowed.

One morning Colonel Leslie announced that he must go to Washington on government business. For an instant Lucinda's heart leaped. The change would do him good, and would give her and the others the opportunity to bring Suretogo up to the necessary condition for next week's race at Lexington. But the next moment the colonel's sonorous voice broke in on her dreams, telling her that she was to go with him.

Sad at heart, she telephoned her uncle who gave the message to Ray. There was chance for only ten minutes together that evening.

In the shadow of a great live oak they clung to each other, too overwrought for words. Through misted eyes each looked at the other's dear face, white blurred ovals in the dim light. Groping, tender fingers outlined the beloved features. Beating hearts told more of their emotions than words could. Their lips touched and clung.

Lucinda drew away, only to let herself droop against her beloved, her head resting on his shoulder. Suddenly the tears overflowed and sobs shook her. For the first time, there was a change in this love of theirs that had always been, as Lucinda had explained to her father that first day, so equally divided. Now Ray was the stronger of the two, the comforter, and manfully he rose to the occasion.

Loving words and tender caresses soothed the almost hysterical girl, after he had carried her to the grassy bank of the terrace and held her as if she were a baby. When she was somewhat calmed, he switched the talk to the forthcoming race.

"I'll win for you, sweetheart," he assured her. "Good will come out of bad, for now that Suretogo isn't a sure thing we'll get big odds on her. Persuade your uncle to slap his roll and yours right on our filly's nose. Every cent I have will be there, too."

"Oh, Ray, you will win!" She stirred in his arms as an idea, awakened by his words, flashed through her brain. "You must!"

"I will! Now tell me once more that you love your jockey."

There was a throaty little laugh from Lucinda, and then came the desired words.

"You darling!" Ray whispered. "You glorious girl!"

A kiss that was their parting one.

Lucinda, Colonel Leslie, Pert, and Nazarene traveled by automobile to Washington. Up until the last moment Lucinda had hoped that she could arrange to have the cat go to Lexington with Suretogo, but to her amazement, the colonel insisted that it go with him. It hurt the girl to think that he would go to such lengths to spite Ray and spoil his chances of winning. She took out her feelings on the car, speeding until her father protested and Nazarene in the rear squealed in terror. For a while Lucinda drove at a moderate pace, only to step on it again and be reprimanded.

"I'd like to have you in a plane, dad," she snapped.

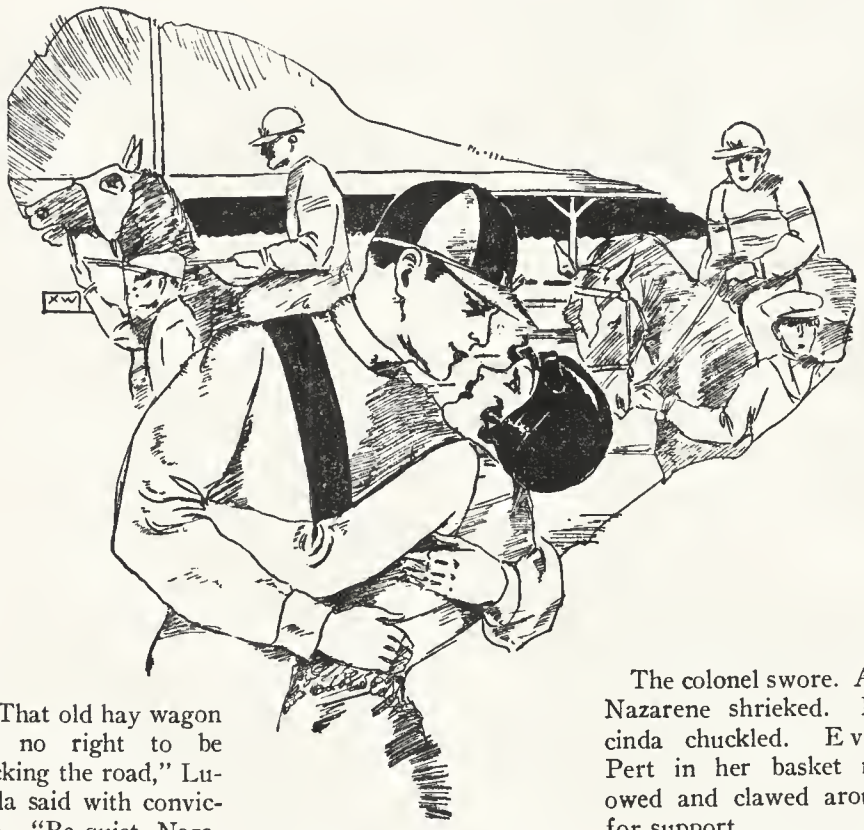
"No one in this world will ever get me off this earth until I have my own wings," returned the colonel.

"They won't be angel's wings," his daughter told him.

"I hope not. As for those ghastly airplanes, I take oath as I've taken it before never to ride in one!"

Lucinda watched him out of the corner of her eye. "You would if it were a case of life or death."

"Never! Nothing on earth could make me break my oath and you know that, Lucinda. Girl, watch where you're going——"



*"You wonder!" cried Ray. "Oh, Luce, how I love you!"*

"That old hay wagon has no right to be blocking the road," Lucinda said with conviction. "Be quiet, Nazarene."

"If only I could drive!" blustered the colonel, his eyes flashing, his face white.

"I'll make you a small bet that we arrive intact," laughed Lucinda.

"Not betting," retorted the colonel. At the wistful tone in his voice, Lucinda brightened. "I haven't a jitney to bet on anything."

"Not even on Suretogo at fifty to one?" asked Lucinda quietly.

"Fifty to one!" The colonel guffawed loudly. "Why, she's never been anything but even money or better. Anyway, she can't win."

"You're nothing if not consistent, darling," teased Lucinda. She eased her way out of line, tore by three other cars and a truck, and ducked back just in time to avoid a wagon coming in the other direction.

The colonel swore. And Nazarene shrieked. Lucinda chuckled. Even Pert in her basket meowed and clawed around for support.

"A Leslie horse," began Lucinda with studied calm, "never ran without carrying your bet, daddy. Are you going to be a poor sport now?"

"Suretogo isn't a Leslie horse," snapped her father.

"Yes, he is, dearest. Uncle Hal bought him with my money."

When the colonel had calmed down after his violent explosion, Lucinda explained matters. "Daddy, you must make a bet," she went on. "I know just the one—a private bet between you and me. If Suretogo wins, you must give your consent that Ray and I marry —your consent and your blessing."

Again Colonel Leslie's temper flared. Lucinda did not answer. Nazarene, her eyes rolling wildly, muttered prayers.

"A lot," said the colonel bitterly, "you

care for my consent and my blessing. You'll do as you please, and——"

Lucinda cut in bitingly: "You know better than that, sir. I shall never marry without them. I'll wait——"

She could not bring herself to utter the words "Until you are dead," but she flashed a look at her father's grim face. She saw him turn pale, then close his eyes as he breathed deeply.

Presently his voice, low and strange, reached her. "If the filly loses, will you promise to give up Ray, not marry him even after—I am—gone?"

Lucinda started. An icy hand clutched at her fast-beating heart, and it almost stopped. This was not what she had led up to. She had fallen in her own trap. She fought for and gained partial calmness, then answered: "That's asking too much, daddy."

"That," pronounced the colonel, "is the bet!"

The speedometer mounted to fifty—fifty-five—sixty—sixty-five, but the driver's thoughts were even speedier. Her voice trembled when she spoke again. "If Suretogo wins, you give us your consent and blessing. If she loses, I won't marry Ray, or even see him again."

Her father turned his head and leaned forward so that he could look into her paper-white face. In a tense voice he repeated the bet. Then he turned around and said to the wild-eyed maid, "Nazarene, you are a witness to a most solemn bet made by two Leslies."

"Yas, suh," gibbered the girl. "Ah is, but ah'm unhappy 'bout it."

"Don't be," her mistress flung back. "Suretogo will win!" Then to her father: "I didn't know a Leslie had to have a witness." That was the last word she uttered until they reached the capital.

In a state of high excitement, she awaited Ray's telephone call. After the first greetings, she poured out the story of the bet. Over the wire came his gasp and ejaculation, then silence. She cried his name and then he answered, his voice toneless, fearful.

He telephoned her the following morning. Suretogo was moping, unhappy, sick. During the following days, he telephoned often, each time more despondent. "Oh, Lucinda, why did you ever make that bet?" he agonized over and over. And in her heart, Lucinda echoed the question.

The afternoon before the big day, he could hardly control his voice and Lucinda could not speak at all. She hung up and flung herself sobbing into Nazarene's loving arms.

Then, dulled with grief, she let the maid help her to bed and minister to her. Upon the high ceiling at which she stared wide-eyed she began to see pictures—her first meeting with Ray, the day Suretogo and Pert were born, the day the filly won her first race, the day Ray and she found that they loved! She kept the last picture with her, refusing to think of the unhappy days and the lost races which followed.

Suddenly she started up, her brain on fire. "Nazarene," she cried, "never mind the cold cloths. I'm all better. Get out my heaviest dress, shoes, coat, and that little leather cap. Don't stand staring! Do as I tell you. I'm going to fly to Lexington and Pert is going with me!"

Nazarene caught at the fluttering ribbons of her mistress' negligee as she entreated her not to go.

"You-all will be dashed to death, Miss Lucinda," she wailed. "An' de colonel'll skin me alive. Ah beg——"

"Nazarene!" Fury shook Lucinda, but the other's convulsed face shamed her. "Get up," she said gently. "You've got to help me get away. If you don't you'll never forgive yourself and you know it. Besides, Magnolia would disown you."

At the flying field she found a pilot willing to take her to the track. It

was dark when she arrived, with Pert tight asleep in her basket. Guided by an obliging but obviously curious track hand, Lucinda hurried down the long avenue of stalls.

"Ray!" she called. The figure seated dejectedly near Suretogo sprang up. Right before the popping eyes of her conductor and a couple of grooms, Lucinda flung herself into Ray's arms. For a long minute they stared into each other's eyes mutely, Lucinda's cheeks flushed, Ray pale as death.

Before he could speak, she plunged into a breathless explanation. "Oh, my dear one, I'm sure I've brought the right medicine for Suretogo!"

"You've brought the right medicine for me at any rate!" Ray breathed, his arms folding her closer, his lips on hers.

Together they went to the daughter of Princess Pat. The horse had half turned, and was regarding them with wistful eyes. Lucinda spoke softly to the filly. "Here I am, precious, and see what I've brought you!" She lifted the cover of Pert's basket, and let Suretogo discover its contents. Pert uncurled herself, stood up, arched her back, stretched, and yawned. She stopped midway in the last yawn as she heard an excited squeal. Frantically, Suretogo sought to tell her friend how glad she was to have her again. She nuzzled the purring ball of fluff with her velvet nose, and gave ecstatic little neighs.

Through misted eyes Lucinda watched her three dear ones.

"You wonder!" cried Ray. "Oh, Luce, how I love you!"

"And how I love you, darling," Lucinda returned. Then, afraid that she was near tears: "P-pray for a fine day. She likes a fast track, our f-filly."

"Mud to the knees couldn't stop us now!" exulted Ray. In a different tone he went on. "But your father? He's sure to follow you. You didn't take the last plane in Washington, did you?"

"No, but dad has taken solemn oath twice never to fly," Lucinda reassured him with a chuckle.

She was up the following morning before the sun. When old Sol did appear it was to find a cloudless sky awaiting him. Under heavy wraps, Suretogo breezed seven furlongs. Lucinda, Ray, and Hal Cavel looked at each other and smiled. But as the filly was being rubbed down, Hal muttered:

"She's in fine fettle, but even at that, I wish to Heaven you'd never made that fool bet, Lucinda. Honey, you——"

Lucinda's quick kiss silenced him. "Suretogo will win!"

"Have you," asked her uncle, "taken the trouble to find out who's running?"

"You mean Odds-on, Lady Dot, and Broacher, the three that—that were in the money the last time Suretogo ran? Oh, we'll beat them!"

"I wish I had your faith. Still, our filly will carry my roll, honey. The odds are now twenty to one, but I'm waiting for them to lengthen. She'll probably start at fifty to one."

"A Leslie horse never did have such odds," groaned Ray.

"No horse ever held the lives of two people in her keeping before," murmured Lucinda. "The odds will shock daddy."

Hal Cavel smiled. His hand felt in his breast pocket.

"The money we win will come in mighty handy," he observed.

Ever since she could remember, Lucinda had been going to racing meets to cheer on the Leslie entry. The thrill of race day had never grown less, and even now when she felt that the torture of uncertainty was more than she could bear, she knew the old lure.

Many admiring eyes were turned upon the girl as she hurried out of the saddling paddock with Hal Cavel, and made her way to the grand stand. To them she was just an extraordinarily pretty girl made even more radiant by excitement.

With a queer, tight feeling around her heart, Lucinda watched the entries being led out. Her eyes glued to her field glasses, she watched the barriers. As they went up, Suretogo broke from behind as was her habit, and for the first sixteenth, led the field. The pressure about Lucinda's heart eased a bit and her breathing was less painful. She let her eyes shift to the two horses close behind her entry, Odds-on and Lady Dot. Steadily, surely, Odds-on, the favorite, pulled away from the others. Now he was even with Suretogo. Now he had forged ahead of her! Lucinda, feeling her knees tremble, leaned against her uncle for support. A reassuring arm went about her, but Uncle Hal did not speak.

At the third sixteenth, Odds-on lagged and Suretogo again led, but only for a few strides. It was Lady Dot who shot ahead and passed the filly. Suretogo closed the space between them with seeming ease, though the pace was heartbreaking and record-breaking. On they thundered, the golden filly and the black with the blazed face, Suretogo at the rail, Lady Dot close to her as a shadow. Nose by nose, they swung into the stretch.

From the home turn down the long straight to the judges' stand, Suretogo and Lady Dot staged a battle that was to become epic in the annals of the track. Foot by foot, inch by inch, the two fought it out. The rest of the field might just as well not have been running.

All about Lucinda, people were in various stages of excited and noisy frenzy, but she felt as if she had been bereft of all feeling, even pain. Like a statue, speechless, pale, she stood staring through the glasses at the flying horses. As they began to eat into the last hundred yards, the noise in the stands crescendoed into a roar. Lucinda saw Ray fling himself forward on the filly's golden shoulders. She knew that he was urging her on with hands and feet, with whispered entreaties and all the strength of his will.

Lady Dot's jockey had long since been using the whip, and Lucinda's trained eye could see that she was tiring. If only they had been at the last eighth instead of so near the end, Suretogo would have been able to wear her rival out.

Ray was riding as he had never been called upon to ride before; the filly was running as she had never run before, her nostrils wide, the whites of her eyes bloodshot, but her stride free and sure.

The din in the stands was terrific as the two horses flashed by the winning post. "Suretogo wins!" cried some. "Lady Dot wins!" cried others. Only the judges knew the winner, for the two had reached the wire so close together that no one else could be sure.

Lucinda, keyed to the breaking point, found the anticlimax too much for her, and slipping from her uncle's arm, dropped back into her chair, near collapse. As from a great distance she heard his voice: "The numbers are going up!"

Lucinda found strength to spring to her feet. Yes, the numbers were up, but Lady Dot's jockey was evidently protesting so that the official placing was delayed another eternity.

In an effort to keep from crying out, Lucinda sank her teeth into her lips. The hand that held the field glasses trembled so that she could hardly see.

The red square! It seemed like a live thing, hesitating before it finally came to roost. Lucinda shut her eyes. When she opened them a second later she saw that the red square had been slapped up under Suretogo's number! Her heart rose on a bound! The blood rushed to her temples. Her whole being throbbed. She felt that she was the very core of the tempest that had arisen from the stands and betting ring. "Suretogo wins! Suretogo wins!"

She flung her arms about Hal Cavel's neck with a great cry of joy. The little man held her close.

"Honey," he said huskily, "you saw a horse race to-day!"

"I lived through a thousand horse races!"

"Poor little girl! Now for a thousand happy married years! Thanks to your filly your uncle can buy you anything your sweet, loving heart desires for a wedding present. What'll it be, child?"

Lucinda was close behind him as he pushed his way toward the stables. "Money can't buy my dearest wish, dear," she answered. "It is to have daddy really reconciled to my marriage. I do wish he had had some money on Suretogo to-day, poor dear."

Hal turned and grinned down at her. "He had two thousand on your horse, Lucinda. Though he wouldn't fly himself, he sent his check to me by air mail."

Lucinda gasped.

"And," went on Hal Cavel, "he's just about ripe for this reconciliation stuff. Remember I told diplomacy, love, and winning the next race would bring him around."

"But I don't think I did use diplomacy or give him love."

"Oh, well, showing him that you were resourceful, daring, and that you honestly loved Ray did the trick. He practically said so when he telephoned me this morning."

Lucinda caught his arm in her strong little hand. "Well, you and your sly secrets!" To the surprised amusement of the surging crowd, she kissed the little man soundly on both ruddy cheeks.

The revel around Suretogo and her jockey was in full swing when Lucinda and Hal Cavel finally got to them. Unmindful of the thousands of eyes around them, Ray and Lucinda embraced, both half mad with joy.

Back in the stable, some time later, they gained partial privacy.

"Ray, you were marvelous!" Lucinda told him, her eyes like stars. "Oh, darling, how you rode!"

"How Suretogo ran, you mean! She knew we had to win or—die!"

"It's a wonderful world, Ray-ray-racy," caroled Lucinda.

"The best there is," agreed Ray. "But, honey sweet, I wish Colonel Leslie approved of your fiancé. Next to you, the colonel's my best friend."

Lucinda laughed softly as she slipped her arms around Ray's neck, and repeated Uncle Hal's information.

There had been many beautiful Leslie brides and many happy ones, but never one lovelier or happier than Lucinda. There had been many pretty and picturesque weddings on the smooth lawn under the great trees that sheltered the Leslie homestead, but never one which had a filly for a guest of honor—a golden filly who danced and nickered down at a tiny fluffy cat whose one blue and one yellow eye regarded the proceedings with becoming gravity.

As she and her new husband fled from the shower of rice and old shoes, Lucinda whispered, her eyes shining into his: "Perhaps we'd best take the other half of our quartet with us, Ray."

He caught her close in his arms, and kissed her soft lips again and again. "Not this trip, dearest," he murmured against her cheek. "We'll love and cherish them as long as they live, but this is our honeymoon, Lucinda-cindah —just you and I alone in a world of love!"

+ + +

# The Unknown Voice

## By Gertrude Schalk

HIGH up on the wall of the telephone exchange, a big moon-faced clock slowly ticked away the minutes. At the switchboard, a curly-headed girl with sleepy eyes yawned and watched the small hand approach the dreary hour of four.

Four o'clock in the morning. An early April morning that belied its name. A dark morning that dripped chill raindrops steadily from black skies.

Betty Andrews shivered every time she glanced down to the end of the room where the windowpanes mirrored the empty room backed by glistening raindrops. It was a miserable morning to be compelled to tramp nearly a mile and a half homeward. Yet at four, Betty would be relieved by the early-morning operator and that mile-and-a-half walk through empty, rain-swept streets would be a necessity.

Again Betty shivered and drew her sweater closer about her slender shoulders. If only she didn't have so far to go to get to her boarding house. When one hasn't been feeling up to the minute and has a faint suspicion that a cold is in the offing, one is apt to want to crawl into bed without too much trouble in getting there.

But Betty's bed was a long way off just then. Across town and down by the river.

Wearily she eased the phones from her ears, rubbing the tender flesh softly.

Her violet eyes were heavy with fatigue. It seemed to Betty that she had always been tired, had always hated to move from her chair. The dull pain at the back of her neck became stronger.

And then a call came, glowing like a firefly on her board. Mechanically Betty plugged in and heard a pleasant masculine voice.

"Operator, I wonder if you could call me a taxi." There was an undercurrent of laughter running through the words that brought an unwilling smile to Betty's pale lips.

"A taxi?" she repeated doubtfully.

"If you please," he chuckled audibly. "I just got off the milk train and I'm stuck in the station with no help in sight."

He had such a charming voice that Betty found herself forgetting how bad she felt. She found herself listening with growing fascination to his laughing remarks.

"If you could rout out a bus somewhere I'd be most awfully obliged." He stopped and then, as Betty didn't answer, he called anxiously: "Are you there? Operator, are you there?"

Betty started. "Yes, yes. I—I was just thinking," she stammered in confusion. "Isn't Joe there?" she remembered tardily that the only night driver should be at the station at that hour.

"Joe?" queried the voice at the other end of the wire. "Is Joe a black cat? If so, he's here, half asleep with a suspicious gleam in one eye."

Betty laughed outright, though it made the pain in the back of her neck worse.

"Oh, no! Joe is the taxi man who should be at the station now. He is the only night driver and is supposed to be on duty until five in the morning."

"Well, I guess I'm out of luck," the man assured her ruefully. "Because I am very much alone and there is nothing outside here except large and copious quantities of very wet rain!"

Betty's eyes glowed warmly and the color came for a moment to brighten her lips.

"I'm awfully sorry," she said, and meant it. "I'm afraid you'll just have to wait then until five o'clock, when the other men come on duty."

"Of all the luck," he stopped, then went on resignedly. "Gosh, I can't sit cooped up in this stuffy place for a whole hour! I guess I'll just hoof it. Well, thanks just the same."

"You're welcome," Betty said softly, hating suddenly to let him go. When one has discovered some one with a marvelous voice, some one who promises to measure up to impossible dream standards, it's terrible to have them disappear. Yet what could she do? She could wish him luck.

"I—I hope you make it all right," she stammered, holding the mouthpiece tight against her lips.

"Thanks." There was a bit of surprise in his voice. Surprise that grew warmer. "That's nice of you. Say, I like your voice. In fact, I—well, I like it a whole lot." Suddenly he sounded very boyish and eager. "You know when a fellow's been away from home for months and months, it sounds great to hear a nice voice! So sort of sweet and—and everything!"

Dreamily Betty stared into space, her mind's eye picturing him vaguely. Was he tall or short, blond or brunet?

"Please," he went on urgently. "Who are you? I'd like to——"

And then rudely breaking the magic thread of sound, came the familiar rattle of the doorknob. The relief operator had arrived.

Quickly, flushing warmly, Betty disconnected the call, mentally wishing that she could have found out what he had wanted.

But Alice, the relief operator, was in the room, grumbling and complaining as usual.

"Gee, I don't see how you stand it,"

she whined as Betty eased her cramped limps from under the board. "I'm about all in. Got a cold or something." She leaned her head in her hand tiredly. "I think I'm gonna lay off next week."

"Why don't you?" Betty was hurrying into her coat. Suddenly the room seemed stuffy, close; yet a minute before it had been chilly. "I wish I could take a lay off," she said wistfully. "But I've only been here three months and I can't do it."

"Why don't you ask 'em?" Alice shifted listlessly into her seat.

Betty shook her head as she buttoned her coat high up under her soft round chin.

"No use. Besides, I haven't any money to lay off with." She didn't tell Alice that it had taken all her previous salary to pay bills she had owed in New York. Bills that had mounted during the workless season just passed. Bills that had only been paid by taking this job in Newburg where living was cheaper and expenses less.

"Got any rubbers?" Alice yawned sleepily. "It sure is one nasty morning."

Betty, pulling on her scarlet beret, looked down at her trim feet.

"No, I haven't. Mine wore out a week ago. I'm going to get some today."

"Well, take care of yourself." Alice swung around in the chair to answer a call and Betty slipped quietly out.

It was fearfully dark. Even the arc lights were out, leaving the town vague, formless and gloomy. Long empty streets stretched forbiddingly into the darkness with not a soul to break the early-morning stillness.

For a minute Betty stood on the step breathing deeply. Her hands clenched tightly in her coat pockets were hot, dry. The cool rain fell soothingly on her face.

For a minute she wished desperately that she wasn't so far from home and bed. Just a minute when the thought of the mile and a half of black streets that lay between her and River Road made her shiver terribly, then Betty moved down the street.

Thinking about how dark the streets were wouldn't make them lighter, she thought reasonably. Nor would remembering the narrow dimness of River Road make the road wider and brighter. In the daylight the road was a lovely walk, bordered on both sides by large, imposing estates. The boarding house where Betty lived was the only place of its kind on the road and she had chosen it because the surroundings were so beautiful.

She struck off as briskly as she could, walking in the middle of the street, ignoring as much as possible the queer pattering noises of the rain and the subdued rustle of bare branches rubbing together. She tried to recall the sound of the charming voice over the phone. The man who wanted a taxi. A wistful smile touched her lips. If only she could have waited to hear what he wanted to say. Yet would it have done any good?

It was hard walking in the rain against the wind. With a sigh almost of relief, Betty dodged down the side street that led to the River Road. Only a short distance more and she'd be home.

Then, on the corner, she stopped. For no good reason her feet halted and refused to go on. In the shadow of a tree she stood wondering uneasily, looking up and down the silent dark road, seeing nothing except the formless shadows of shrubs and trees.

She shook herself, took a step forward, then stopped again.

There was something holding her back! A nameless something that tingled down her spine coldly and made her clench her teeth together.

For long seconds Betty stood there, strained forward, listening, peering into the darkness.

Then suddenly, breaking the stillness softly, came the sound of footsteps and a low whistle.

Betty was motionless by the tree, just another shadow. And wide-eyed she watched the approach of the dim figure of a man. He was on the other side of the road and he carried a huge bag that thumped rhythmically against his leg. The bag was of a light color and showed up in the darkness while the man himself was just a huge moving shadow.

He was whistling softly, a weird foreign melody that sounded oddly in keeping with the gloomy road. He passed Betty, and his feet made soft crunching noises on the road.

She followed him with her eyes, scarcely breathing. Without a doubt, Betty knew she had run into the man with the charming voice! The man who had wanted a taxi and, failing to find one, had had to walk clear across town from the station.

It couldn't be any one else. For none of the natives would be out at this hour strolling along with a suitcase.

For the time being Betty forgot the wind and rain. Forgot the uncomfortable feel of her wet coat and shoes. For a breathless moment romance had passed by touching her with rosy-tinted gossamer wings.

With ninety-nine chances out of a hundred of not meeting him, she had run full-tilt into the charming-voiced man! Only, he was very busily engaged at that moment with walking out of her life as quickly as he had walked into it.

Already he was yards down the road, the darkness covering his retreat softly. Oh, if there were only some way to stop him, call him back, just to hear his voice again!

Mutely she stood rooted to the spot, wondering dismally if every one's romance came so suddenly and was lost just as quickly.

And then while she stood there, something happened.

At first Betty hadn't noticed the squat moving shadow that seemed to dodge the footsteps of the man with the bag. She had been too intent on the man himself to pay much attention to what followed him. But now, suddenly she saw it!

Something vague, formless, that glided past her without a sound! The fine hairs on the back of her neck rose stiffly when it passed and a chill played up and down her spine

With eyes grown accustomed to the heavy darkness, Betty watched this deeper shadow go down the road. A big lump rose in her throat. A cry that wouldn't come forth. A cold hand seemed to press her chest so that she could hardly breathe. She wanted to cry out and warn him—the man with the bag—warn him of impending evil!

Unconsciously she had moved, and now she found herself running down the road behind the menacing shadow. Noiselessly she ran, lessening the distance between them. Past her own house she flew to come to an abrupt halt in the shadow of a tree.

The man with the bag had stopped in the road to light a cigarette. Almost at his elbow a driveway wound up to one of the beautiful homes that lined the road. And just behind him was the queer shadow.

The man was bending his head over his cigarette, operating a lighter. Just for an instant the little flame flickered brightly in the darkness, flickered and shone brightly on something lifted high in the hand of the following shadow! Betty saw when the shadow rose and developed into a man of surprising thinness, whose arm had risen with the rapidity of a snake's fangs!

The breath clung in her throat, it was an agony to open her mouth. Her feet were paralyzed with fear; they wouldn't move.

Yet, somehow, she screamed. Not loudly, but enough to carry through the

still air to the man intent on his cigarette.

She screamed. The shadow drew back his arm and threw the gleaming thing! And simultaneously the man with the bag fell!

Betty stood rigid, hardly daring to breathe. There was a faint noise as the shadow fled past the fallen man. A shadow that looked fearfully over its shoulder as it ran. It was gone, into the darkness from whence it had come.

Somehow Betty forced herself to go to the fallen man. She walked numbly, without feeling. He was dead, she knew that. He was dead and her brief romance was over.

But he wasn't dead. She found that out immediately. He was on his knees in the mud, swearing under his breath, fumbling around in the dark.

"Oh! You're not hurt!" Betty began to tremble, the breath coming back into her throat. He started, lifted his face, and stared blankly at her.

"Well, I'll be—contaminated!" he whistled. Still on his knees, he leaned forward and touched her coat with a tentative finger. "You're—real?"

"Real?" Betty came a step nearer. She could see his face now, dim in the surrounding darkness. "You're sure you're not hurt?"

The man just looked at her. He was young, she could see that. Young and lean with an attractive mouth that was made for smiles and laughter. Only now he wasn't smiling. He was just looking.

*A minute more and he was coming down the stairs, Betty in his arms.*

The sky was growing a bit lighter so she could see the tumbled shock of dark hair that was minus a hat.

Betty grew suddenly warm and stepped back, aware that they had both been staring very hard. He moved slowly, settled back on his heels, a dreamy look coming over his face.

"It couldn't be that cocktail I had on the train," he murmured softly. "There wasn't enough liquor in it. And, besides, nightmares don't come in such a pleasant guise. Maybe you're a vision!" His voice trailed away into silence, though his eyes never left Betty's.

And Betty, aware of the strangeness of it all, began to feel slightly let down. Had she, too, been imagining? Could she have dreamed the evil shadow and all the rest of the impossible happenings?

Once more the man reached forward and touched her coat, took a fold of it in his fingers and rubbed it reflectively.

"No dream stuff that," he said suddenly with conviction. "Dreams are made of fairy mist and clouds—and this coat is distinctly woolen and wet! Very wet!"

He stood up. With one lithe movement he was on his feet, wiping his hands boyishly on his muddy coat, running his fingers through damp hair.

"Did you scream?" he asked suddenly. His pleasant eyes were searching her face.

"Yes," Betty didn't know whether to feel sorry or just ashamed. "I'm awfully sorry but I thought I saw——"

"It's all right," he interrupted when he saw her distress. "Only you startled me so I dropped my lighter and, when I tried to catch it, I tripped over my bag and—kerplunk! I was in the mud." He began to chuckle. "A low comedian's trick I call it, falling over my own bag that way."

He was fumbling with the retrieved lighter. In a second it was working, sending up its tiny flare of light. And in that light he gazed shrewdly at the girl.

At that moment Howard Blake thought that adventure had surely followed him across the seas to his very doorstep. Just four hours off his yacht, and he was in the midst of another adventure that held a most fascinating girl with wide, dark eyes. None of his previous adventures had held so charming a person, and Howard found his heart doing a double-quick beat.

"Who are you?" He startled her with the question. Please." He smiled winningly when she hesitated. "I don't mean to be abrupt, but you will admit that a man would like to know the name of a young lady who screams in the wee sma' hours of the morning on a lonely road."

"I don't blame you," Betty said quickly, shifting a little so that she stood out of a puddle of water. "It must seem funny, only I thought I saw——"

Again he interrupted her, eagerly, his eyes beginning to shine.

"Haven't I heard your voice before?" he came nearer, looked closely at her pale face. "It sounds so familiar."

Betty began to feel warm inside. He remembered her voice:

"I—I'm only the telephone operator," she said meekly.

"I knew it!" Jubilantly he sang the words, reaching over to take her hand in his. "I knew I'd heard your voice before. Now tell me, what are you doing out here and why did you scream—tell me everything!"

Hesitating a little, wondering just how he would take it, Betty told her story. She waited to hear him laugh at the end. But the laugh didn't come. On the contrary he looked very grave and intent.

"You say you thought you saw some one following me," he mused, looking at her hand still clasped in his. "Some one who threw something?"

"Yes." Betty felt better now that

she knew he wasn't going to laugh at her. "It looked like a knife."

Swiftly the man turned, raked the wall of trees behind him with a keen glance.

"A knife thrower," he muttered under his breath. His jaw was set in a hard line when he faced Betty again. "And he threw it."

"I heard it whiz through the air," she said seriously. His gravity impressed her tremendously.

Once more he turned, went a few steps toward the row of trees that made an effective barrier between the huge estate and the public road.

"It should be here," he said under his breath. And then Betty saw it! Straight in front of her, at about the height of a man's heart it quivered in the bole of a tree.

Silently she touched his arm and pointed it out. And as quietly Howard Blake went and drew it forth. Drew it out to hold it in one hand while a queer look came into his eyes.

"A knife thrower," he said slowly.

Betty peered with fascinated eyes at the narrow-bladed knife. Bone handled, hand carved, it was a sinister and yet a beautiful object. In a museum it would have called forth admiration, but here, lying across the man's hand, it was wickedly evil.

Betty shivered. "Do you know who did it?" she whispered.

The man nodded shortly and his hand went instinctively to his coat to touch a small bundle that bulged his breast pocket.

"I know. I should have expected it," he went on. "I might have known I couldn't get away with it." He looked at her suddenly and his eyes were touched with a faint fear. "You saved my life."

"Oh, it was terrible!" Betty felt the old pain returning to her throat. Now that the excitement was over, her weariness was coming back.

"It was a man from whom I stole something," Howard spoke grimly. "Something that I had gone almost around the world to get—for some one else." For a moment he brooded silently. "I know I shouldn't have done it. But that doesn't help matters any now. I must return it, that's all."

Betty stood listening to him while her head began to ache and her lips burned hotly. She should have been in bed, but it was worth suffering a little just to be able to look at him and listen to his voice.

And then she sneezed. Unexpectedly, interrupting Howard's voice, making him realize where he was.

"Well, of all the fools." He shook his head. "Keeping you out here in the rain while I meander on about myself! Come, let me see you home. I'll bet you've caught a nice cold and it's all my fault. By the way, my name is Howard Blake. And yours is——"

"Betty Andrews," Betty supplied in a weak voice. "But, really, Mr. Blake, I feel all right."

Nevertheless, in spite of her protests, it was comforting to have his hand under her arm, piloting her up to Mrs. Hill's boarding house. And the thoughts of her nice warm bed made her head swim.

He left her at the door.

"I'll be back this afternoon after you've had a chance to sleep some of your cold off." He held her hand tightly for a moment in his. He seemed loath to let it go as his eyes found hers in the growing light of the morning. "I want to see how you are."

"Thank you," Betty murmured, turning blindly to seek the stairs and her room. She really felt awfully funny inside. All hot and queer and stuffy. Slowly she went up to her room and somehow fell into bed.

Howard Blake walked slowly across the road to pick up his bag and continue on to his own driveway. It had

been his eagerness to reach home that had caused him to leave the yacht in New York and take the train to Newburg. Evidently the knife-throwing man had been following him since leaving the yacht, waiting for an opportunity to kill him and recover the little jeweled box that Howard had stolen from a small temple in India.

If it hadn't been for Marcia—well, it had been Marcia who had demanded that Howard get her this box as a wedding gift. And eight months before, when he had proposed to her, it had seemed a reasonable request. In fact, his infatuation for the worldly Marcia would have caused him to go to greater lengths to please her, even than defying the whole corps of temple priests as he had done.

But now, eight months older, and eight months removed from Marcia's cool beauty, Howard felt the silliness of his quest. Half around the world to secure one little box! A holy box that Marcia would probably forget to use once she had obtained it. It was just something for her to brag about to her friends. "How Howard went to India just to get me a jeweled box!"

Trudging up the winding driveway that led to his home, Howard gave himself over to vaguely exciting thoughts of the girl he had just left. She wouldn't send a fellow tramping over the world for a silly box. She would probably be satisfied if the fellow just—well, just loved her.

Conscious of a guilty feeling of pleasure, Howard frowned and tried to forget the girl who had saved his life. He must remember that he was still engaged to Marcia. And at the thought, his heart seemed to grow heavy as if it had suddenly found its burden too much for it to endure.

It was late afternoon before Betty awoke from an uncomfortable slumber to find Mrs. Hill watching her from the half-opened door. The landlady's thin features were sharp with anxiety, her eyes filled with fear.

As soon as Betty's eyes opened Mrs. Hill broke into swift speech.

"Do you know it's past your time to go to work almost?" she cried. "Miss Andrews, what is the matter with you?"

Betty blinked at her vaguely, only half understanding. It was difficult to hear her voice; everything wavered queerly in the room. And a thousand tiny pitchforks pricked at her chest every time she breathed.

"Do you hear me?" Mrs. Hill came another step into the room. "The telephone company called up, they want you to come in early because one of the girls is sick—got a fever." Suddenly she stopped, gulping noisely. "Miss Andrews! You—you're sick!"

"Sick?" Betty whispered hoarsely in a voice that somehow didn't seem to belong to her. "I—I'm all right."

But Mrs. Hill was backing away from her, her thin face pale.

"You can't stay here," she said thickly, twisting her hands under her apron. "I got to think of my other boarders."

Betty twisted and turned uneasily, throwing off the covers. It was so hot despite the open window. Her head was on fire and her mouth was as dry as parchment.

If only the rain would come down cool and sweet on her face.

Dimly she heard her voice asking pitifully:

"Is it raining out there? I want the rain—the cool rain."

Mrs. Hill fairly flew down the stairs to the phone. She must call the hospital right away. She couldn't afford to have a sick girl in her house!

As she reached the bottom step, the front-door bell rang shrilly, as if an impatient finger was pressing it hard. Muttering to herself, Mrs. Hill opened the door. A young man stood on the porch. He smiled engagingly.

"Is Miss Andrews still in?" he inquired, coming into the hall. "I'm a bit late getting over—rather overslept myself. Is she here?"

Mrs. Hill stiffened, pursed her lips together and looked him over carefully. Betty Andrews had never had any callers since coming to Newburg and, as far as Mrs. Hill knew, this fellow was a stranger in town.

"Miss Andrews is ill," she snapped at last, deciding that he couldn't be very important. "I am going to call the hospital and have them come and take her away."

"Ill?" The young man appeared conscious-stricken and dazed. "There, I knew it would happen! And it's all my fault!"

To which puzzling remark Mrs. Hill could only raise scraggly brows in bewilderment.

"But the hospital—you can't send her there!" Howard went on pleadingly "She needs home care."

"And do you think I can give it to her?" demanded the woman coldly. "Me, a poor boarding-house keeper with a thousand and one things to do every minute! I'm going to call the hospital!"

"Wait, please!" Howard's brain revolved a mile a minute. He must do something right away. He couldn't let them take Betty to a common hospital!

***The day came at last when Betty was able to sit up in the big chair by the window. To sit up and laugh and talk with Howard.***

Why, if it hadn't been for him she'd have been all right. His keeping her standing out there in the rain and wind.

"Young man," Mrs. Hill was getting impatient. "Will you kindly leave my hall so that I can go on with my work? I can't spend all day arguing with you."

But Howard Blake had decided just what to do. He whirled and dashed out onto the porch, calling back over his shoulder:

"You wait right there. I'm coming back and take Miss Andrews to my house!"

And he was gone, leaving Mrs. Hill staring open-mouthed at his flying figure as he ran down the road and up the driveway to his own house.

Who was he? Mrs. Hill wet her lips nervously, wondering if she had perhaps made a mistake in treating him so rudely. Was he any one of importance? she wondered.

She peered out into the rainy April afternoon and saw him disappear into the driveway of the Blake estate. What was he doing in there? There was no one to answer her, and Mrs. Hill had to be content with wondering and waiting impatiently until he returned.

Five minutes later a closed car emerged from the Blake drive and fairly flew up and stopped abruptly in front of the boarding house. The bareheaded young man jumped out of the front seat and turned to help a woman to alight.

Mrs. Hill stared, her eyes filled with wonder. It was Mrs. Grayson, the housekeeper at the Blake mansion.

Even as Mrs. Hill looked, too startled to do more than gape, the young man ushered Mrs. Grayson into the house.

"You fix her up then call me," he was saying urgently. "If she's very ill, we haven't a minute to lose."

Mrs. Grayson nodded and hurried up the stairs with barely a nod to Mrs. Hill. Then for three or four expectant minutes Mrs. Hill watched the young fellow pace the hallway, muttering to himself. Then Mrs. Grayson called and Howard leaped up the stairs. There was a whispered conference with his housekeeper, then Howard tiptoed into Betty's room.

A minute more and he was coming down the stairs, Betty a mere bundle of blankets in his arms. Not even her nose showed, and the last Mrs. Hill saw of her former boarder was a brief glimpse of her being handed tenderly into the back of the car while Mrs. Grayson pillowed her head carefully in her lap.

Betty knew nothing of the trip up the hill to the Blake estate, nor did she know what it was all about. All she knew was that terrible dreams haunted her sleep and hundreds of tiny pain-tipped arrows pierced her body every time she breathed.

That she wasn't ever alone in her agony, she knew. She could dimly hear soft voices and could feel cool hands easing her body when the pain grew too intense. And, best of all, but then, that was perhaps the nicest dream, nothing more, she could hear Howard Blake's charming voice close to her ear.

It wasn't once, nor twice, but nearly every time she could hear anything above the roaring in her ears. And sometimes she felt sure he held her hand. At least she liked to think it was his hand that was so comforting. When he held her hand like that she didn't mind the pain much. It was as if his voice was a soothing cool blanket of rain, his hand a cool balm that took the fever out of her.

Once toward the end of the siege of pain and fever, she became almost conscious. Just long enough to hear two voices—two men talking. And one was Howard!

"Run down condition," said one voice, a strange one. "Working too hard—had rather a hard time last year—caught it from one of the operators."

Then Howard's voice, not laughing

now, but serious—deadly serious—came to her out of the haze.

"But she's better? No danger now, is there? Tell me the truth."

"Almost out of the woods," the other voice assured him. "Just a matter of time and patience."

And as Betty drifted back into a dreamless sleep, she heard Howard's faint, "Thank Heaven!"

Many hours later Betty opened her eyes on a new world. It was a lovely golden world with blue skies and fragrant breezes blowing through the dainty white curtains at the windows.

Betty opened her eyes and then closed them again quickly. At the first bewildered glance she knew she wasn't at Mrs. Hill's, nor was she in any room she had ever seen before.

Once more she let the long lashes lift slowly. Surely not—no, of course, one didn't wake up in heaven like this! In a huge snowy bed with a blue silk counterpane folded at the bottom; in a room with white curtains fluttering in a breeze. No, it couldn't be heaven.

And then Betty discovered something else bewilderingly glorious. Across the room, not too far away, just where a person might sit comfortably in a huge easy-chair and see just what was happening in the big bed, was Howard Blake. He was lounging in the chair, a book in his hands, but his eyes were fixed on nothing in particular. In fact, but a second before he had been staring at Betty. Staring at her wistfully just as he had been doing for days and days.

Even as her eyes found him, he turned his head again and saw her. With one bound he was at the bedside, bending over her, a delighted smile creasing his cheeks.

"At last!" he cried jubilantly. "I thought you'd never open your eyes again. Thought you'd decided to sleep for another year or two."

Betty felt her lips tilting in a smile. She couldn't help it. He was so eager and glad. And it didn't seem strange to find him there beside her. Suddenly she felt as if he had always been with her, always been waiting for her to open her eyes and smile. She wanted to tell him that, but somehow all she could find to say was:

"I'm hungry," in a very weak, thin little voice.

Howard bent over and took one of her hands in both of his and there were two bright tears in the corners of his eyes. Betty saw them, but he didn't appear to notice them. He only laughed a bit shakily and patted her hands.

"Just like a kid." He blinked his eyes quickly. "Hungry! Well, we'll see what we can do for you."

He squeezed her hand and was gone. So quickly that it made Betty's head swim. She closed her eyes, and before she knew it she had drifted off to sleep again.

She was sleeping peacefully when Howard came rushing back with the nurse and a tray of food. The nurse wouldn't let him wake her up, so he went back to his chair and sat watching her. Just as he had done every minute they would let him, since she had been brought into the house.

There had been times when both the doctor and the nurse had driven him out for hours on end. Those had been terrible hours to remember. Hours when he had paced the floor downstairs. Remembering the gallant look in the violet eyes, remembering the soft, sweet voice, the tender lips that had smiled so bravely on the dark road.

In the days and weeks that Betty had been fighting for her life in that room, Howard had been beside her, everything knocked out of his mind except the slim figure under the blankets. He blamed it all on himself, even though the doctor had assured him that Betty had already been ill when he had found her on the River Road. But, his fault or

not, nothing mattered except Betty and whether or not she got well.

But she must get well, he told himself. That was his prayer over and over as he sat watching her hour after hour, powerless to help her. When the nurse let him, he would sit close to her and hold her hand. He liked to think that she knew he was there. Though time and time again he berated himself for even thinking that she would remember him at all. Even if she did grow quieter when he held her hand, it didn't mean anything.

And now, the danger over, Betty slept a deep, natural sleep. A healing sleep that would soon have her on the road to recovery. And Howard, growing a little pale from his confinement in the house, hovered near, his heart unknowingly in his eyes.

The days passed quietly, slowly. The sun grew warmer and moved higher in the skies. The river spread out and basked in the returning warmth, its bosom blue and white with reflected clouds.

And the day came at last when Betty was able to sit up in the big chair by the window. To sit up and laugh and talk with Howard. To catch and cherish each warm revealing glance he gave her.

They had such gay times, those two. They played silly little games; games that they loved because they played them together. And Howard had all his meals in the sick room and refused his steak because Betty couldn't have a bit, too. Such gay meals they were, with laughter and bright glances winging their way across the daintily set table. A little table that was only a few feet across. So small that by bending over Howard could almost touch his lips to Betty's cheek.

Then they celebrated the first week that Betty set foot downstairs. Celebrated with a dinner in the lovely mellow dining room, with places set for two, one at the head, one at the foot. And with miles of shining mahogany and lace in between.

Betty, in blue crêpe with a huge Chinese shawl covering her shoulders, looked like a misty-eyed angel at her end of the table. She looked so sweet and far away, that Howard grew uneasy and began to move nervously in his chair.

"Betty," he pleaded suddenly. "Do I have to sit way down here? There's so much space between us. I—I can hardly talk to you."

Betty flushed warmly and she had to hold her hands tightly in her lap to keep them from reaching out to him. This was just another precious moment for her to keep in her treasure chest of dreams. Somehow it all seemed like a dream; a lovely dream that would one day end. She knew that, far back in her mind. But every day she thrust it farther back, and refused to think of it.

There was time enough for broken dreams later. Later when all the lovely moments had passed, when Howard forgot her and returned to his own life.

Sometimes when she thought of his going out of her life, Betty had to hold back the frightened tears. What would life be without him? It was unthinkable!

So now Betty thrust into the background all thoughts of the impending separation and entered into the gay spirit of the moment.

"Remember you're the host," she warned him seriously. "A host always sits down there."

Howard's eyes were clouded and he bit his lip. Then he grinned. The grin that always set Betty's heart to thumping overtime, made her want to creep into his arms and stay there forever.

"I guess I can suit myself, being the host," he said quickly. And he got up, gathering his plate and silver in two hands. "I'm going to sit beside you!"

He marched down the length of the table and, placing his service on the shining wood, drew in a chair.

"There!" He looked at her and his smile was wistful.

For a moment his hand strayed to hers, strayed to hover protestingly over hers while his eyes said things—wonderful undreamed-of things! Betty felt her eyes mist with happiness. And then from the stillness, the magic stillness that had meant so much, came a strange voice, low, melodious.

"Evidently you are where you want to be," it said coolly.

Howard jumped to his feet, turning to face the door, and saw a tall, beautifully formed woman. Marcia!

She came nearer the table, her eyes narrowing, fixing themselves on Betty. With a contemptuous glance she dismissed the girl seemingly from her thoughts.

***"Darling!" Howard bent his lips to hers and suddenly nothing else mattered in the whole world but their love.***

"You wouldn't come to me, darling, so I came to you," Marcia purred, watching Howard closely. "Evidently you have forgotten you have a fiancée."

Behind him, Betty shivered, drawing the shawl closer about her shoulders. Her dream was broken into a thousand bits. It wasn't as if she hadn't expected it, she tried to reason. She had, but not in this guise. She had never thought of a fiancée! And such a gorgeous one!

Foolish to imagine that Howard or any other man would think of such an ordinary girl as she was when they could have such a girl as Marcia.

"Do you realize that you have been home for over a month and you haven't even phoned me?" Marcia was fast losing her composure.

"I know." Howard was embarrassed, flushed. "But you see I've been so busy that——"

"Busy playing nursemaid to a telephone operator!" Marcia interrupted him scornfully. "While I have to interview reporters and tell them lies, tell them that you were quarantined. Tell them everything except the truth, that you were tied up with a common little cheap——"

"Marcia!" Howard took a quick step forward, his eyes burning dangerously. "I wouldn't if I were you!"

"Well, what do you expect me to do, take it calmly? Let a girl walk right under my nose and take you away? Right on the eve of our marriage?" Marcia was furious, her voice trembled with anger. "Don't you forget I'm marrying you next month!"

Howard's lips were white and he seemed to find difficulty in speaking.

"Marcia——"

Betty slipped from the room. Unseen she crept across the wide hall to the front door, flight the only thought in her mind. She must get away, far away from Howard. So far away that she'd never see him again.

The tearing dull pain that made her so weak and queer inside must be heartbreak, she told herself. This ache that made her stagger down the driveway, made her want to seek the darkness of the river.

It was good enough for her, she thought despairingly. Falling in love with a man with a charming voice. A wealthy man who had lots and lots of money. Foolish of her to even think for a minute he could think of her other than as a poor unfortunate girl who needed help.

Stumbling down the drive in the darkness, Betty suddenly heard the roar of a car behind her. Some one was leaving the house hurriedly. Mechanically she stood back, pressed against the shrubbery while the twin lights sped toward her. One second they illuminated her clearly, then they were gone, down to the road and beyond.

Wearily Betty went on, still holding the shawl close about her shoulders. Then again behind her came a sound. This time a man's voice, calling desperately, wildly:

"Betty! Betty! Where are you? Betty!"

Howard, calling her! Like a pale wraith made of cloud and moonbeams, she stood swaying in the night wind while down the drive sped a man—wild-eyed.

"Betty!" He suddenly saw her and went speechless. Almost sobbing he drew her into his arms. Tears wet her cheeks and mingled with the touch of his lips on hers. His tears and her tears, both warm and salty and dear.

A moment there in the damp night, shaded by trees, surrounded by the soft whisperings of wind in the shrubbery, arms close, heart to heart throbbing shamelessly.

Then without a word he picked her up in his arms, holding her close. Back to the house he carried her, his cheek resting on hers.

Back to the warm living room to sit in one corner of the huge sofa, to press quivering lips thankfully to hers.

"Betty, why did you run away?" he asked her later. "I nearly went out of my mind when I found you were gone."

Betty nestled closer to him. She dreaded thinking about it again.

"It was Marcia," she whispered. "You were hers and I couldn't stand it."

He held her tight, brushed tender lips across her hair.

"But I'm yours now," he reminded her. "I allowed Marcia to jilt me. It wouldn't have been fair to either of us to have been married, knowing that I loved you. I made her see it that way. She never really cared a lot for me," he went on in a lighter vein. "It was more a case of her having to marry some one and it might as well be me—you know how it is. Only"—he flushed a bit—"I did think I liked her an awful lot last year."

Betty looked up quickly, happily. "As much as you like me?"

"No, sweetheart." He kissed her warmly. "That's why I went to India for that blamed box—a crazy idea. But you know I gave it back."

"You mean you gave it to the man who tried to——" There was veiled horror in Betty's eyes as she stopped speaking.

"Yes, the fellow who tried to knife me to get his box back. I found him skulking about the very next night and gave the box back to him. So now, he's back home and I'm here, in your arms!"

"And I'll never let you go," Betty murmured impudently, growing suddenly brave.

"Darling!" Howard bent his lips to hers and suddenly nothing else mattered in the whole wide world but their love.

## LOVE

TURN low the light, let reverie
Inveigle you with mystery.
Dream once again of days now gone
When, sweet, you were my one alone;

When you and I found worlds of bliss
Within the bounds of ling'ring kiss;
When arms of mine infolded you,
And lovelight gleamed in eyes of blue.

Those happy days in memory
Live on for aye, will ever be
An inspiration to my heart,
Although we may be miles apart.

H. CARL ANDERSON.

# The Priceless Pearl

## By Florence Ferguson

FARRADAY'S ISLAND, with the tropical moon shining down upon it, was like a fairyland; Rita Farraday, lovely and alluring in the silvery radiance, might easily have been the fairy queen.

But Rita, as she stood on the veranda of her grandfather's bungalow, was not thinking of that, she was too intent upon a small schooner which, under the impulse of a light breeze, was entering the lagoon through the passage in the distant coral reef.

Presently the vessel, having worked its way into the quieter water, came about and dropped anchor within a short distance of a trim white yacht, which also lay in the harbor. A moment later a man's figure slid over the schooner's side into a dinghy and began pulling landward.

Rita's sweet lips curved in a tender smile. Steve and the *Seabird!* How she did love both of them! With the speed of a swallow she darted down the veranda steps and across the stretch of beach to the edge of the water, where she stood waiting.

Closer and closer came the small boat.

Presently it grated on the sand, and the youthful skipper of the *Seabird* leaped from it. The next instant Rita was in his arms.

"Oh, Steve," she murmured, as his

lips met hers, "I'm so glad you're back! There's a stranger here—that yacht out there, and ever since his arrival he's been trying to induce grandfather to sell him the Chinese Pearl."

Steve frowned. "A pearl buyer, eh? Well, I must say he travels in style."

Rita crept a little closer into his arms. "That is what worries me, dear! If he was just an ordinary professional buyer, I wouldn't be so afraid of grandfather selling, but he's a collector—a gentleman, and rich. Oh, it would be dreadful if he managed to get the pearl!"

Steve kissed her reassuringly. "Oh, come now, honey, cheer up! I can't believe your grandfather would ever think of selling the pearl when he knows what happened to your father and mother."

Rita shook her head doubtfully. "You wouldn't think so, but this stranger—this Mr. Wilcox, says grandfather can name his own price, and of course that would tempt anybody."

Steve drew up his tall, powerful figure with an air of determination. "Well, he hasn't got the pearl yet. I'll talk to your grandfather, Rita."

The captain of the *Seabird,* despite the soiled clothes he wore, was a handsome man, and the way the tropical sun had bronzed his face and scorched his hair, only served to make his eyes seem bluer and his teeth whiter.

From the day of Steve's arrival at the island, three years before, Rita had chosen him as her hero. She had been only sixteen then—too young to know what love really meant, but in the past year love had revealed itself. Steve had crept into every corner of her heart—begun to occupy every moment of her thoughts, until at last came the wonderful day when Steve told her that her love was returned. Rita still wondered at the miracle of it.

Back from the beach a short distance, just on the fringe of the jungle, was the store and bungalow where Rita's grandfather, old Martin Farraday, had held forth as a trader for the last forty years.

In the front room of the house a lamp was burning, and as Steve and the girl turned away from the water they could see the old man sitting at his desk. For a moment they paused, undecided whether to go in or not, then Steve led the way down the beach where the two seated themselves at the foot of a breadfruit tree.

Now that Steve was with her, Rita's heart was at peace. Everything, she was sure, would be all right. The lovely gold-black eyes that gazed into Steve's told him how she felt about it and the curly head on his shoulder rested there in perfect security. If the captain of the *Seabird* was good to look upon, Rita was even more so. Dark and dainty, she had all the exquisite grace of a fairy, her skin, though she had spent the larger part of her life in the South Seas, still retaining its creaminess, as was shown by the low-necked, sleeveless white dress she wore.

Above the two the moon sailed serenely; half a mile distant could be heard the faint crash of the Pacific rollers as they hurled themselves against the reef guarding the lagoon. For a while they sat talking quietly, then the light in the bungalow winked out and Rita arose to her feet.

"Come, Steve," she said, holding out her hand to him, "I've got to run or grandpa will be after me. You'll be up to the house for breakfast, won't you?"

Steve shook his head as they walked back to the boat. "Don't see how I can, dear. I'm sleeping on the schooner tonight and aim to start unloading at the sheds the minute the sun is up. But I'll be with you before noon sure, and then I'll talk to your grandpa about the pearl."

With Steve in the dinghy rowing out to the *Seabird,* Rita returned slowly to the bungalow and to bed. For a while

she lay wakeful, apprehensive once more regarding the pearl, then remembering that Steve's opinion generally had great weight with her grandfather, she turned over and went to sleep to dream that Gerald Wilcox, the owner of the yacht in the harbor, had given up his quest and sailed away.

But the next morning, as she sat on the veranda, busy with some mending, she discovered how contrary dreams are, for instead of going away, Wilcox came ashore from his boat earlier than usual. As the yacht owner came up the steps, Rita nodded a greeting. Her grandfather had gone to the unloading sheds at the other end of the lagoon, where the *Seabird* had been shifted, to inspect the cargo.

Helping himself to a chair, Wilcox smiled at her lazily. He was a sleek-looking individual; from the top of his head to the toes of his white canvas shoes, there was not a hair or a button out of place. Rather slender, with close-set, slate-colored eyes, it was hard for Rita to judge of his age, but she put it down at around forty. As he smoked a cigarette, Wilcox caressed with a nervous forefinger the small waxed mustache on his upper lips.

Wilcox was not the gentleman that old Captain Farraday and his granddaughter thought him. A self-made man, he had not been at all particular as to the methods he employed. Despite an acquired suavity he was the same Gerald Wilcox who had wildcatted in the oil fields and managed to enrich himself by a series of shady operations that had nearly landed him in the hands of the police. But half a dozen years had elapsed since then and times had changed.

Wilcox had become a world roamer and a dilettante in many ways, particularly in the collection of pearls. He was mad about pearls. It was in Sydney that he had heard of the wonderful Chinese Pearl which old Captain Farraday had in his possession. Wilcox had at once ordered his yacht headed for Farraday's Island, where he had arrived almost a week before.

Presently, after eying Rita for a few moments, he spoke:

"You do not like me so very much, do you, Miss Farraday?"

The unexpectedness of the question and its bluntness, threw Rita into confusion. She blushed painfully.

"Really, Mr. Wilcox," she faltered, "I—I don't see why you should say that. It is not that I dislike you, it is only that—that you are trying to buy my grandfather's pearl."

Wilcox laughed. "And why should I not buy it if your grandfather is willing to sell?"

With an impulsive gesture Rita moved her chair closer to the stranger's. "Mr. Wilcox," she said, "I should like to tell you the story of that pearl. A great many years ago my grandfather saved the life of a high-caste Chinese when the man was drowning. To show his gratitude the man presented my grandfather with the pearl you are trying to buy, and at the same time gave him a warning."

"Quite so, I know," jeered the yacht owner. "The usual hokum."

"No, it was not hokum," retorted Rita. "My grandfather was told never to let the pearl go out of his hands unless he made a gift of it. Otherwise misfortune would result."

"And that, I suppose," taunted Wilcox, "is the reason you do not wish him to sell it. You are afraid something might happen."

"No," said Rita, "that is not it. It is because something did happen and would probably happen again. When I was a small child my grandfather had some financial trouble; so he gave the pearl to my father, who commanded one of his schooners and had him take the jewel to Sydney and leave it there to be sold. My father did so, and on the

way back to the island a hurricane wrecked the vessel, and my father and my mother, who was with him, were lost. Since then my grandfather, after recovering the pearl, has never let it out of his possession and never will with my consent."

Wilcox nodded. "I understand." For a while he smoked in silence, then: "Miss Farraday, I have been thinking. Would you like me any better if I promised that I would make no further effort to buy that pearl?"

Rita clasped her hands imploringly. "Oh, Mr. Wilcox, I could never thank you enough!"

Wilcox chuckled inwardly. Though Rita did not know it he had found it quite useless to try to bargain with Farraday. The old man had been adamant in his decision not to sell the pearl.

"Sell it!" he had growled in response to Wilcox's repeated overtures. "Not for all the gold in the world will I sell it! I tried it once and made Rita an orphan. The only way the pearl goes out of my possession is when I give it to the lass for a wedding gift."

Wilcox, who had been attracted by Rita from the day of his arrival, had immediately decided to ask her to marry him. It would be quite a coup to secure such a girl and such a pearl at the same time. He had been waiting his opportunity to speak. He now felt that it had arrived.

Leaning forward, he took the girl's hands gently in his. "Miss Farraday—Rita," he began, "the Chinese Pearl is not the only pearl your grandfather possesses. He has another which I covet even more. A pearl of a girl! Oh, Rita, you are wasted in this lonely spot. Marry me and make me forget about the pearl I could have bought."

For an instant Rita stared at him as though she did not comprehend what he had said, then with a gasp she snatched her fingers from his and sprang to her feet, her lovely eyes wide with apprehension.

"Mr. Wilcox," she panted, "you—you must be mad! Why, I hardly know you!"

Had she been aware of her grandfather's decision regarding the pearl, she might have grasped the method in Wilcox's madness, but she knew nothing. Old Captain Farraday was notoriously close-mouthed, and still looked upon his granddaughter as too young for confidences.

Wilcox, on his feet also, made an attempt to draw the girl to him. "But, listen, Rita," he cried, "I am asking you to marry me. I love you! I've loved you from the first moment I saw you!"

Rita thrust him away. "No, no! It's impossible!"

Wilcox's sallow face flushed darkly. "I see," he said, "there is, perhaps, some one else. Perhaps that chap who came ashore from the schooner last night and joined you, while I sat on my deck smoking. Am I right? There is some one else?"

"Y-yes," stammered Rita.

Wilcox bowed stiffly. "I am so sorry. Had I known I should not have spoken. But you must admit it is hard on me. To fall in love with a girl and then find that she loves another, is disappointing, to say the least. Is there no hope for me at all? I could give you so much, Rita."

Once more he reached for her, but she evaded him. Then, catching sight of her grandfather and Steve advancing up the beach, she ran to meet them.

Scowling, Wilcox dropped back into his chair. The girl was going to be more difficult than he had expected, but if marrying her would get him the pearl, marry her he would. She was well worth marrying anyhow. A wife as beautiful as Rita could never be anything but a credit to him.

Wilcox was a stubborn man. Rita's refusal had only made him more de-

terminced. He wanted the pearl, but now hc wanted Rita twice as much. Surely a girl would think hard before definitely refusing a man of his wealth.

By thc time Captain Farraday and Steve, accompanied by Rita, reached the bungalow, Wilcox was his usual smiling self.

Captain Farraday, a huge, white-haired, white-bcarded old fellow, shaggy in body and manner, introducced Steve briefly and then went indoors, telling Steve to come also and help him check up on the shipment of shell just brought in by the *Seabird*. Steve was about to follow when Wilcox detained him.

"Just a minute, captain," hc said. "Haven't I met you or seen you somcwhere before?"

"Well, not lately, I'm afraid," responded Steve. "I haven't been away from the neighborhood of the Solomons for a matter of three years."

Wilcox shrugged. "I see. Then, no

*"Marry me as though you were glad, and I will keep quiet forever regarding Steve Corbin."*

doubt, I am mistaken. But your face certainly looks familiar."

"Possibly because it's just an every-day face," grinned Steve, as he went indoors.

Wilcox looked after him with narrowed eyes, then he turned to Rita. "Am I to understand that that is the gentleman——"

Rita's cheeks flamed as she nodded.

"Strange how I seem to remember his face," went on Wilcox. "Just what is he, American, English, or what?"

"I've never inquired," replied Rita, rather stiffly. "All I know is that Steve is Steve and that he was down with fever when he came here some years ago on the Anderson schooner, *Jill*. Then when he got around again, grandfather made him an offer to stay, and he's been here ever since."

Wilcox looked thoughtful. "Well, I feel more and more positive I've seen him somewhere. Are you sure he really is Steve Corbin, as he calls himself?"

Rita's eyes began to sparkle angrily. "No doubt he is, but even if he weren't I imagine grandfather and I would like him just as well."

"I wonder if you would," said Wilcox. "Suppose he had been a criminal? It comes to me now where I saw his face—or rather, a face like his. It was a picture in one of the newspapers. When I get back to the yacht I'm going to have a search and see if I cannot find the page. Suppose this Steve person turned out to be a rascal, what would you say then, my dear?"

"Why, that's absurd!" cried Rita. "What's the idea of stirring up all this fuss, Mr. Wilcox? What right have you to say such a thing about Steve?"

"I'm not saying it," replied Wilcox. "I'm only asking—only suggesting——"

"Well, please don't suggest anything further," interrupted Rita. "It's unfair to make such insinuations behind a person's back, and I am sure they are quite unfounded."

But in spite of her brave words, Rita had to admit that Wilcox's remarks worried her. Loving Steve as she did, a vague fear began to creep over her. Could there possibly be anything in Steve's past? He had always been more or less of a mystery to her grandfather and herself. On his recovery from the fever, he had volunteered nothing about himself, and the old captain, who had learned to accept a man on his face, had asked nothing. He was only too glad to secure the services of a reliable white at the trading station.

But now, Rita told herself, the time had come for Steve to speak. She could see that Wilcox wished to eliminate him as a rival and for that reason was giong to dig up his history, and if there was anything that could be used to his disadvantage, Wilcox would use it.

Yes, the time had come for Steve to tell something about himself and she was going to try to make him do it. When presently, after an angry silence between herself and Wilcox, the man she loved, came out from her grandfather's office, Rita sprang to her feet and caught him by the arm.

"Sit down, Steve," she said, throwing a look of defiance at Wilcox, "I want you to tell me something."

"That is just what I'm going to do," replied Steve, as he dropped into a chair. "Rita, you needn't worry any more about Mr. Wilcox buying that pearl. I've been talking to your grandpa and he says there isn't enough money in the world to buy it, and that he's told Mr. Wilcox so again and again."

"Grandpa said that!" gasped Rita.

"That's what!" grinned Steve.

"But Mr. Wilcox gave me to understand——" began Rita.

Steve scowled. "Yeah! Mr. Wilcox is pretty good at creating false impressions. Aren't you, Mr. Wilcox?"

The older man's dull eyes suddenly flared as they met the contemptuous

glance of his questioner. "Why ask me, Corbin?" he snapped. "You're pretty good at creating false impressions yourself. Why haven't you ever told Captain Farraday and his charming granddaughter just who you really are? Answer that."

"I don't have to answer it," growled Steve, rather taken back. "And I can't see that it is any concern of yours who I am."

"Oh, Steve," pleaded Rita, "why don't you speak frankly? Why can't you show Mr. Wilcox there is nothing to hide?"

Steve shook his head stubbornly. "I tell you, Rita, I'm not going to talk about myself to this man. Why should I?" Putting a match to his pipe, he arose to his feet. "Well, I think I'll be getting along to the sheds and see how my boys are doing."

For a minute or two after Steve disappeared, Rita sat in her chair staring before her miserably, then she lifted her eyes to Wilcox's. Suddenly she began to cry.

"I hate you!" she sobbed.

Wilcox made a deprecatory gesture. "But why?" he demanded. "Because I have proved that our friend has been deceiving you?"

"Well, what if he has?" flamed Rita. "Haven't you been deceiving me also? Didn't you give me to understand that you were going to buy the pearl unless —unless I—and all the time you knew you could not buy it at any price."

"All is fair in love and war," quoted Wilcox. "You seem to forget that I love you, Rita."

"You love yourself!" retorted the girl bitterly. "You would like to add me to your collection just like you would the pearl. But you won't, Mr. Wilcox. I tell you, you won't."

Wilcox turned pale. "Am I to understand that you would actually marry Corbin even though you know nothing about him?"

"Oh, go back to your boat and let me alone," sobbed Rita, hiding her face in her hands.

Rita hoped desperately that Wilcox, discouraged, would pull up anchor and leave the island, but could she have peered into his cabin that night and seen the way he was poring over a month-old copy of a San Francisco paper, she would have known at once that her hope was in vain.

It was a display advertisement that interested Wilcox—an advertisement showing the picture of a young man who might have been the twin brother of Steve Corbin. At the top of the advertisement was the caption, "One Thousand Dollars Reward for Information Regarding This Man." At the bottom was the name of the chief of the San Francisco police.

Having read the short advertisement through, Wilcox, smiling sardonically, cut it out and placed it in his wallet. Just what Steve had done he could not imagine and he did not care much. He had already decided to make the crime fit his needs. He would tell Rita that Steve was wanted for murder. That ought to bring her to terms.

Undressing, he climbed into his bunk and stretched out luxuriously. "To-morrow," he murmured, "to-morrow I shall tell the lady that she and I will be married, after all."

Having slept badly, Rita was late in waking the next morning. The sun was already hot against her bamboo blinds when she opened her eyes. Outside on the veranda she could hear her grandfather's voice, though she could not distinguish to whom he was talking, or what he was saying.

Slipping on a kimono she stole along the wide hall that bisected the house until she neared the front door, where she paused, listening. Her grandfather was talking to Wilcox.

As she hurried back to her room, Rita was crimson with anger at the effrontery

of the man coming again. She decided she would remain indoors until he had left.

Having dressed, she loitered in her room until presently she saw her grandfather and the yacht owner pass the side of the bungalow on the way to the plantations inland. Then slowly she made her way to the veranda and the light breakfast that was awaiting her on the table at the far end. Munching her fruit and wishing that Steve were with her, she was not aware of Wilcox's return until he came toward her.

"Good morning!" he said, smiling down at her. "I have a little something here I wish to show you." He extracted the newspaper clipping from his wallet and offered it to her. "Look at that, my dear. Isn't that a picture of young Steve?"

Rita stared at the slip he was extending, then slowly she reached for it. A brief examination and she crumpled the thing in her hand.

"Well, isn't that Corbin? You know it is."

"I don't know anything of the kind," retorted Rita. "Men have had doubles before; and even if it were his picture, it doesn't say he has done anything."

"No," responded Wilcox, "but I say he has done something. I recall the case perfectly—a wild party followed by a shooting in New York. Shall I wire the San Francisco police that they can find their man on Farraday's Island?"

For a moment the two gazed at each other, the man's face triumphant, the girl's slowly whitening with anguish.

"Well," said Wilcox, "shall I tell them?"

Rita shuddered. "What do you want me to do?" she whispered.

"Marry me!" Wilcox's tone was not unkind, but it had a steely quality that showed he meant what he was saying. "Marry me as though you were glad, and I will keep quiet forever regarding Steve Corbin. He will be safe here with your grandfather. What do you say, my dear Rita?"

White and shaking, the girl arose from her chair. "Marry you!" she faltered. "Marry you and leave here?"

"Yes," said Wilcox. "My captain is fully qualified to perform the marriage ceremony. And there is another thing: when you invite your esteemed grandfather to be present, please do not forget to remind him to bring the pearl which he has promised you as a wedding gift. Do I make myself clear?"

Rita did not answer. She simply stared at the man before her, horror in her eyes. Then at last she found her voice.

"So," she cried, her voice shrill with bitterness, "at last I learn the true reason for your interest in me. Well, you've had your trouble in vain. Even if grandfather offered me that pearl I would not take it."

"Oh, I think you will," replied Wilcox coldly. "If you do not, I shall certainly spill the beans for Mr. Corbin. I mean it, my dear. The price of my silence is you and the pearl! Do you understand? You and the Chinese Pearl or the skipper of the *Seabird* stands trial for murder."

The next few hours were like a hideous nightmare to Rita, for Wilcox, using to the full the whip he held over the girl, had insisted that she marry him that night. Rita had pleaded with him in vain.

"Awfully sorry, my dear," he told her, "but I'm taking no chances of a slip-up. My motto is 'do it now'!" Then he had left her.

What was she to do?—Rita wondered. A word from Wilcox and the police would seize the man she loved. Over and over again she visualized the scene —the courtroom—the stern faces—the solemn words of the judge. The picture drove her frantic. Any sacrifice was better than to have that come to Steve. Whatever he had done, she felt

*Rita made no reply. She dared not, for she could not trust her voice.*

had been done on impulse. Steve was good. She loved him. She could not let him suffer.

It was afternoon before old Farraday got back from inspecting his coconuts. At the sheds, Steve, still sulking, was finishing with the unloading of the shell.

Rita's face was wan, her eyes big with suffering, as she sat on the veranda wondering just how she was to tell her grandfather what she had to tell him. When she saw him coming she ran to freshen herself up.

All the actress in her was on the alert. If she was to save Steve she must convince her grandfather that she was fond of Wilcox and wanted to be his wife. She knew he would never consent to the marriage unless he felt convinced it was for her happiness, and that even if the old captain knew about Steve, he would demand that Steve be sacrificed and not herself. Therefore she dared not mention Wilcox's threat regarding the man she loved.

Old Farraday was tired after his trip.

For a while he sat opposite his granddaughter and rested, then he began to talk of Wilcox.

"You'll be surprised at what I'm going. Of course, I wouldn't have it for fact is, the man would like to marry you. He spoke to me about it this morning. Of course I wouldn't have it for a minute."

Rita's heart leaped. Here was an opening for her, so she responded accordingly.

"But why not, grandfather?" she inquired. "I'm sure Mr. Wilcox—— Oh, grandfather, you must consent! I've—promised myself to Gerald, and——"

The old man snorted. "Do you mean to say you'd actually think of marrying that fellow?" he demanded, frowning. "By heavens, it don't seem like you, Rita! I could have bet if you were wanting to marry with any one it would be with Steve."

Rita broke in with a laugh—high-pitched and artificial. "Oh, my goodness, grandpa, you wouldn't have me marry Steve—a mere floater? Steve is all right to be friends with, but when a girl marries she wants more than a floater."

Farraday wagged his head dejectedly as he looked at her. "I can't make you out, lass! I can't make you out! You seem to have changed since this outsider came. He must have dazzled you with his yacht and his tales of traveling. But if you really love him, why, that's different. I'm old and I'd like to see you happily married before I die. So if you're sure—well, I'll go with you to Sydney and see you married proper. I can arrange my affairs to leave here in a week or so."

A sob swelled in Rita's white throat, but she choked it down and sprang to her feet with a semblance of gayety.

"A week or so!" she cried. "Oh, grandpa, Gerald could never wait like that! He says he has to get away tonight on—on business. He says his captain can marry us, so there'll be no need for you to leave here. All you'll have to do is to put on your best suit and give me away. And, oh, grandpa, don't forget the pearl! I'm counting on that for my wedding present!"

The old captain looked at her blankly for a moment. "The pearl?" he muttered. Then he nodded. "Ah, yes, the Chinese Pearl which your fine gentleman wished so much to buy. I wonder now. Almost it makes me think he's using this way to get it. Are you sure he loves you, Rita? If I thought he didn't—even if I was sure you loved him, I'd—oh, I hate to let you go, lass!"

Swift as a bird, Rita perched herself on the old man's knee. "How you talk!" she cried. "Don't you suppose a girl can tell when a man loves her? And we'll come back now and then, grandpa—visit with you, you know."

Farraday kissed his granddaughter roughly. "'Twon't be the same!" he muttered. 'Twon't be the same!"

At Rita's request her grandfather agreed to send Steve away an hour or two before sundown on some business with the overseers on the other side of the island. Though he had agreed, the old man was plainly shocked that she should ask such a thing.

"But don't you want to say good-by to him, Rita?" he remonstrated.

"No," said the girl hurriedly, "it is better to have it this way. Steve and I are through with each other. I wish to have no sad farewells to remember now that I am going out into the world and live."

As she spoke, Rita flung all the indifference she could into her voice. From her tone no one would ever have suspected that her heart was breaking.

Would the day never pass?—she wondered. Now that her road was marked out for her she felt she could not leave the island quick enough. Each additional minute she remained was a moment of longing for the man she loved

—to feel Steve's strong arms about her, holding her safe. But Steve, so far as she was concerned, was gone for good; she would never see him again.

And then to her mingled joy and horror, as she sat alone after her grandfather had gone to start Steve on his journey, suddenly the man she loved stood before her.

"Rita!" he cried hoarsely. "What is this I hear about your marrying Wilcox?"

"You—you know?" she gasped.

"I made your grandfather tell me. But of course it isn't true, Rita."

With a supreme effort Rita forced herself to meet the emergency. Pale but composed, she met his eyes. "Oh, but it is," she said.

Steve stiffened as though she had struck him. "Do you mean—you can't mean that you are really going to marry him?" Steve's voice was choking with agitation. "Why, Rita, I thought you and I——"

The girl shook her head. "No, Steve, that's off. I am going to marry Mr. Wilcox. Rather surprising, isn't it? But after thinking things over I decided it would be safer to marry a man with no mystery attached to him. A man who wasn't afraid to use his own name. And then, of course, there is Mr. Wilcox's money to be considered."

Steve, ghastly pale, even through his sunburn, stared at her. Then his lip curled. "I forgot about the money," he sneered. "Are you sure it isn't more the money than the mystery?"

Rita made no reply. She dared not, for she could not trust her voice. With her eyes cast down, she sat like a statue. Steve, pacing up and down the veranda, kept silence also. It seemed to Rita as though his every footfall thudded on her heart.

At last he stopped in front of her. "Suppose I told you about myself?" said he. "Would it really make any difference? Would you still marry him?"

Rita's trembling fingers gripped the arms of her chair desperately. If only Wilcox did not have Steve at his mercy! If only there was some other way to save him!

Steve, misinterpreting her hesitation, cried out harshly:

"I knew it! I knew it! I knew it was the money! Ah, you're just like all the women—you can't resist money. Very well, marry your millionaire! Marry him! I'm through!"

Without another word, he whirled about, cleared the rail of the porch with a bound and began running up the beach.

Rita, her face colorless, watched him as long as she could see his tall figure. She felt like a dead thing. Presently a turn in the beach hid Steve from view.

The moon was late rising that night. When Rita and her grandfather stepped into the trim yawl which Wilcox had sent for them, only the stars were shining.

Rita was thankful for the darkness. Her face was a mask—fixed and strained. During the short walk from the house to the water's edge, she had been afraid she would faint.

At the top of the yacht's ladder Wilcox was waiting. As Rita reached the deck, he shot her a glance of warning.

"Remember," he hissed, as he took her in his arms, "you are supposed to be glad to be here. I want no scene with your grandfather."

Rita nodded automatically, and immediately threw herself into the spirit of the farce. Laughing and chatting, she and Wilcox led the way to the saloon, where a gayly decorated supper table was laid, and where the captain of the yacht, red-faced and uncomfortable in a new uniform, was waiting for them. Old Farraday, following close behind his granddaughter, scowled at the officer.

"I have no fondness for marriages by ships' officers," he said to Wilcox. "It should be a minister. I have changed

my mind. We'll go to Sydney and we'll have a real minister."

Wilcox's face clouded; an ugly light flickered in his eyes; then with an effort he mastered his temper. Until Farraday turned over the pearl he must be humored. Wilcox's glance sought Rita's, and the girl comprehending, turned to the old captain reproachfully.

"Oh, grandpa," she cried, "how can you talk so when we have everything arranged? I want to be married at once! Later on, if you insist, we'll have a minister, but now—but now——"

Her voice broke. All at once she seemed on the verge of collapse. Staggering forward, she flung her arms about his neck and clung to him, laughing and crying hysterically.

Abruptly the old man held her off and looked at her sharply. "What's this? What's this?" he demanded. "What's the matter with you, child?"

Desperately Rita tried to regain control of herself, but the suffering she had been through had completely unnerved her. All she could do was to sob and mutter unintelligently.

"Let me have her," said Wilcox.

"Not yet," growled the old captain. "I do not like the look of things so much, Mr. Wilcox. I think it would be well if Rita went ashore for the present."

Black rage surged over Gerald Wilcox. With a peremptory gesture he motioned for the skipper of the yacht to leave the saloon, then whirled upon the couple confronting him.

"And just how are you going to get ashore, Captain Farraday?" he purred. "Not in any boat of mine, you may be sure. If you go ashore you'll swim and take your chance with the sharks."

Old Farraday wagged his shaggy head belligerently. "And that we'll do, Mr. Wilcox," he rumbled. "The more I see of you the less I want Rita to marry you. Better that the sharks should have her." With a gesture he drew his granddaughter closer. "Come, lass, let's go back to Steve and the island."

Wilcox laughed raucously. "Steve! A lot of good Steve will do you! Why, man, the police are after him! They are advertising a reward of one thousand dollars for information about him, Captain Farraday, and I am going to collect that reward."

The mention of Steve's name seemed to act like magic on Rita. With a half-stifled shriek she tore herself from the arms of her grandfather and turned upon Wilcox. "No, you shall not have him!" she wailed. "Grandfather, don't let him get Steve!"

"What does all this mean?" shouted Farraday. "What's all this fuss about Steve?"

Wilcox chuckled. "You heard what I said, didn't you, captain? Corbin is a fugitive from justice. Unless Rita marries me I shall give him up."

"Then she doesn't love you, after all!" retorted the old man. "Thank Heaven for that! Wilcox, I see it all. As I suspected, you're just marrying my girl to get the pearl. Well, you shan't have her!"

The yacht owner shrugged carelessly. "Oh, well, I won't grieve so much. Sell me the pearl and I'll be quite satisfied. Or if you're afraid to sell it, give it to me."

"No, you scum!" growled Farraday. "Under no circumstances do you get the pearl! And that's final!"

Wilcox's face became livid. "So that's final, is it?" he challenged. "All right then I shall wire the police at once, and if you think you're going ashore to warn that crook, you're——"

Abruptly he ceased speaking. Facing him at the foot of the companionway was Steve Corbin.

"So I'm a crook, am I, Wilcox?" Steve's tone was ominous.

Rita threw herself upon him with a cry of joy. "Steve! Oh, you've come back! You've come back to me!"

Steve's face softened as he kissed her. "Yes, dear," he crooned, "I've come back; and I'll never leave you again."

But even as he spoke, Rita remembered. "Oh, but you must," she wailed. "I forgot! You must go away, quiek—quick!" She beat upon his chest with her hands. "Go, dear, go! He's sending for the poliee! Oh, don't you understand? Go!"

Steve shook his head. "Don't you worry, honey! I heard all he said and it's all right. I can explain everything!"

"Crooks can always do that!" sneered Wilcox.

Steve flushed as he put Rita gently aside. "That's the second time you've called me a crook, Wilcox," he said, "and it's just twice too often."

"Yes?" jeered the yacht owner.

"Yes," snapped Steve.

With that he leaped. The next instant a sunburned fist crashed against the point of Wileox's jaw and sent him hurtling into a corner, where he lay inert and sprawling.

***"So I'm a crook, am I, Wilcox?" Steve's tone was ominous; his blue eyes blazing.***

"Come," said Steve, turning to Rita and her grandfather, "let's get out of here. I've got some of my boys waiting. I reekon no one will stop us."

"They'd better not try!" rumbled the old captain.

Once more the moon was riding high over Farraday's Island, transforming

the place with its silvery touch. Almost a half hour had elapsed since the episode on the yacht. Old Captain Farraday, worn out with the excitement of the evening, had gone to bed. Out in the bay, Wilcox's vessel could be seen leaving her mooring and heading for the reef passage and the open sea.

Rita, as she sat with Steve in the hammock on the veranda, crept a little closer to him.

"Oh, Steve, dearest," she whispered, "I wish I didn't feel so afraid. Suppose he should send the police here?"

"Well, what if he does?" replied Steve, smiling at her. "Didn't I say I could explain everything?"

Rita shuddered. "Yes, I know, but still——"

Steve laughed at her tenderly. "Oh, you delicious little morsel! Is it any wonder I love you? I do believe you'd stick by me if I were the worst kind of a rascal, wouldn't you?"

"I'm afraid maybe I would," sighed Rita. "I just can't seem to help it."

"Well," said Steve, "luckily for you I'm a perfectly respectable person, and my name really is Steve Corbin, only with another name—Durand, added to it. Stephen Corbin Durand, at your service; named after my dad, Stephen, Sr., head of the Gibraltar Steamship Line of New York.

"Dad and I had a row. He wanted me to go into his office and I wanted to go to sea, so we quarreled and I cleared out. But now that he is advertising for me, I reckon he wants me back; and now that I have you, dearest, I shall go. And that's all there is to tell you—there isn't any more—except that when you and dad meet, well, you'll have to be just a little careful."

A vagrant breeze from the ocean stirred the leaves of the coconut palms growing at each side of the house. Far off, across the water, the stern lights of the yacht blinked farewell.

Rita drew Steve's head down to hers and kissed him softly. "Won't your father like me?" she queried anxiously. "Why will I have to be so careful?"

Steve's blue eyes twinkled at her teasingly.

"Why? Because if you're not, the old chap will most certainly fall hopelessly in love with you, just as I have," he replied, drawing her close to him and kissing her eagerly.

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## LIGHTNING

THE lightning streaks across the sky,
Red jagged tongues lick the velvet night
And dart on the sea that between us doth lie,
Shaking the calm with a woe of fright,
Just as it did on that last tragic night—
Mad ribbons of flame in the thunder's cry!

The lightning streaks across my heart,
Arrows of pain in its pulsing red,
Reminding me of the leagues that part
Thy lips from my kiss, thy breast from my head.
Oh, the sad burning memories that tread
Where lightning streaks across my heart!

VESTA I. CROCKER.

# The Laughing Husband

## By S. Andrew Wood

**A Serial—Part I.**

CHAPTER I.

TERRY WEDDERBURN rolled upon the pile of crackling brown leaves and stared lazily up at the autumn sky.

"And so," he said, "that is my fate. I shall marry the silly little daughter of an enormously rich manufacturer, and she will have a terrible complexion and pale-greenish eyes devoid of expression. She will giggle stupidly every time I speak to her and wear clothes that will make her look the size of a house and, and—finish it, Dawn!"

The girl by his side played with the warm, sandy soil. She raised the shapely oval of her downbent face as Terry spoke. Her eyes, which were gray and soft, were shadowed as they gazed across the russet of hill and valley. But her mouth—red and warm, with its short, curving upper-lip—broke into rather tremulous laughter.

"And she will worship the ground you walk on and never dream that you married her for her money," she said. "Women are like that, Terry. And even if she knows it will make no difference.

She will always hope wildly that you will end by falling in love with her. Which is what you will probably do."

The young man picked up a stone and aimed it at the white tail of a rabbit that flashed into the undergrowth.

"Little prophet!" he said softly.

He sat up and glanced at his watch. He rose to his long length, shaking off the leaves that clung to his clothes. Bareheaded and tweed-clad, he looked like some simple giant, rather than the son and heir of an ancient and impoverished house.

The sleeping cynicism of his good-looking eyes melted. He took the girl's hand and pulled her gently to her feet.

"The time of farewell comes, Dawn, my dear!" he said. "I have an hour to pack and catch my train."

He sighed. The month's rest which was now ending had been absurd and rather sweet. He had buried himself from his own world in the lovely little town of Clairmont, tired of his rôle of penniless aristocrat.

He and Dawn had first met in the milk-white mists of the morning as he returned from an early round of the partridge coverts. The girl lay shivering in a deep gully where she had fallen and hurt her ankle, and he had carried her to the little house where she lived with a very old and very grim woman. That had been the beginning.

It seemed marvelous that her name was Dawn. He had told her his name and beyond that, they had not known anything of each other—a sweet friendship that had harmed neither of them.

"Good-by, then!" Dawn said. There were crushed and withered leaves clenched tightly in her slender hand, but she did not know it. As for Terry, he only saw her brave smile.

"We've been good pals," he said, slowly, looking down at the curve of her soft, flushed cheek. "There hasn't been any nonsense, has there? We do not even know each other's last names and probably never shall. Perhaps I am only a poor grocer, pretending to be a gentleman for a brief while. And perhaps you are only a little working-girl, recovering from an illness in the country and playing with her dreams. When we meet again, I might be serving you with butter over a counter, or you may be the girl in a hotel cigar stand. It doesn't matter, does it? We haven't hurt each other."

"No!" Dawn whispered. "We haven't."

She wondered, oddly and gravely, if it was one of the kind of lies the Recording Angel made a note of. A half-scared revelation came to her that perhaps all women saw the weaknesses of the man they loved, as completely as she saw Terry's. It was strange that such thoughts should swim over her just as he was about to pass laughing out of her life forever. Forever!

The warm, autumn-ripe wind seemed to cry the words softly in her ears. She fought suddenly against something that threatened to shake the smile from her lips. Yet he was selfish and cynical. A parasite, men of the rough-and-tumble world would call him; a young man-about-town to whom a woman was something to help him to greater wealth and pleasure. She saw it all so clearly because of her puritan breeding. And yet she loved him. The marvel and pain of it made her hold her breath.

Half-ironic, half-careless, Terry Wedderburn's laugh came again.

"Think of me when I am the husband of the little fat lady, dawn girl!" he said. "Good-by!"

He released the fingers which he held and moved with his swinging strides across the ground to the road that led to the village.

He turned to wave his hand to her, but Dawn had disappeared.

On a gray and windy afternoon, a week later, Terry Wedderburn lay

sprawled in a big armchair in his bachelor apartment in East Tenth Street.

"Lazy dog!" he said, stirring the wire-haired terrier on the hearthrug with his foot. "We'll go and pay our respects to the guv'nor to-morrow."

He yawned and looked into his young, clean-cut face in the mirror opposite his chair. He frowned a little at the bored reflection and turned to gaze out at the glittering fragment of Fifth Avenue which was visible from his window. The telephone bell shrilled at that moment. Macallister, the dog, barked sleepily.

The deep, precise voice of George Wedderburn came over the wire. Terry kept the momentary annoyance from his answer.

"Now? All right, sir. I'll be there within half an hour."

He kicked Macallister gently and called Scarlett, his man. It was unusual for his father to trouble him unless he had guests, and George Wedderburn entertained very little nowadays in the big house facing Washington Square where he stayed for a month or two every year.

It was raining and the windows of the big, grim house were brilliantly lighted when Terry reached Washington Square. As he entered the bare library he saw that another man stood there, side by side before the glowing fire with his father; a little man in shabby evening clothes.

"So this is the boy!"

Shrewd, hawklike eyes swept Terry from beneath bushy brows. A small, hard hand shot out and grasped his.

"Mr. Benjamin Compton, Terence," George Wedderburn said. He spoke almost nervously. He was big, like Terry, though the thick thatch of hair was white, and his blue eyes were faded and moistened. It was said that everything about George Wedderburn had faded except his pride, which was a fierce, cold flame.

"A self-made man who began making nails in a cellar at five o'clock every morning when he was ten years old," snapped the little man. "I don't hide it and I don't boast of it. Terence, eh? Irish blood? Brian Boru or some old heathen like that your ancestor? Thoroughbred, I've no doubt. I'm pleased to make your acquaintance."

Terry stood still. He flung a mute glance at his father but George Wedderburn had turned away. He was staring into the smoldering fire with thin lips compressed.

Ben Compton pushed his cigar between his teeth. He looked like a little rough-haired terrier, as vulgar and as virile. He sat down in an armchair and waved Terry to another. George Wedderburn stood without motion, like a statue carved against the firelight.

"This is between you and me, Mr. Terence." Ben Compton flung a sidelong look of good-natured contempt at the elderly man before the fire. "You're a young man with nice white hands and lots of time on 'em. But you've brains. So I'll give you my tale crisp and clean. I've got a mortgage on Wedderburn Chase, which is your ancestral home. Your father signed it five years ago. The time has expired, he can't repay the loan I gave him then, and I could foreclose to-morrow. I've always hungered for a real ancestral place, Mr. Terence, and now Wedderburn Chase and its estate is mine."

Terry half rose, his hands clenched. His father turned a gray and heavy face from the fire and bowed his head. A twinge of bitter pity shook Terry at the sight.

"Sit down!" crackled Ben Compton. "How would you like it back as a wedding present?"

Terry flushed. "I'm not getting married—thanks," he said, crisply.

Ben Compton gave a silent laugh. He uncrossed his short legs and leaned forward.

"Listen, my boy!" he said, harshly. "I've got everything but blood—riches, position, power. I want no more than my own stuff for myself. But I've an only child, a daughter, who will one day be one of the richest women in the country. She's a sweet, good girl. But I've seen girls of the wealthy—debs as they call themselves—snub her, because her father is a self-made man. That's got to stop. It will be, when she's the wife of a man with blood and an old name. It's the creed of your class that you must marry for money. Mr. Terence, will you marry my daughter and save your family fortunes?"

Terry stood up. He had turned pale and humiliation gripped him as in all his lazy, happy-go-lucky life it had never done before. A memory of soft gray

***"She will worship the ground you walk on and never dream that you married her for her money," she said. "Women are like that, Terry."***

eyes and laughing lips came to him before he knew it. His creed! He had confessed it cynically to the dawn girl, and now——

"Terry!"

It was only a whisper. George Wedderburn was watching his son as though he hung upon his breath, eager, haggard and old-looking. If that pride had bowed, then, indeed, the Wedderburn fortunes tottered.

Terry steadied his voice.

"And the—the young lady?" he asked.

Ben Compton smiled coldly.

"She's my daughter," he said. "She's been brought up to do what I tell her. A good-looking young man like you will have won her heart before she knows it."

Terry laughed, with a slight metallic sound. Little fat lady! It was a business deal upon her part as well as upon his. For what he could give her in blood and social position, she would give him wealth. It was a fair exchange. The color had returned to his face. It was his creed and the creed of his class in these days. The sacrificial altar was his destiny. What did it matter?

"I shall be pleased to marry your daughter, Mr. Compton," he said. "When are we to meet? To-night?"

Old Ben Compton sprang from his chair. A burst of bluff laughter broke from him.

"To-night if you like!" he said. "You can catch the evening train to Winston and Rose shall meet you with the car. There's a housekeeper there who will chaperon till I come to-morrow. I'll wire her right this minute, eh?"

"Excellent!" agreed Terry, recklessly.

He dared not stay to be a spectator of his father's battered pride. He dared not go back to his apartment to be alone with his own self-contempt. The action and adventure of a rainy night's journey with his unknown future wife at the end of it—little fat lady—appealed to him as an adventurer.

The rain drummed on the train windows. The rattle of it was audible above the slowing-down roar of the engine. Terry opened his window and looked out. The bleared lights and streaming platform of a small, dimly lit station slid into view. The train stopped.

Terry was the only passenger getting off. He stood, clad in his heavy raincoat, bewildered for an instant. Then, outside the station, he saw the gleaming headlights of a large car.

"Mr. Wedderburn, sir?"

He started and then laughed at himself for being nervous. He followed the chauffeur to the car. Inside it was complete darkness. A wild desire to retreat seized Terry, a sullen anger at his own mad caprice.

"Please sit down—here."

It was a soft, low voice, and it trembled slightly. He saw the glint of bright hair and the pale wraith of a half-hidden face, by his side.

"I'm Terry Wedderburn," he said. "I suppose you got your father's wire, Miss Compton? I'm a thoughtless fool to have brought you out to meet me on such a night."

He felt suddenly foolish. It made his speech dry and short. The car had started noiselessly. Through its windows here and there, the twinkling lights of a few scattered houses were visible in the heavy darkness.

"I am glad—you came."

The girl seemed to catch her breath on the words. The darkness still wrapped her.

Suddenly, her warm, bare hand fell upon his.

"Terry!" she breathed.

The light of a street lamp whisked into the dark interior of the limousine. Terry saw the glowing face and shining eyes.

"The dawn girl!" he whispered, unbelievingly.

There was a sob in the soft laughter that came from her lips. He struck a match and held it over his amazed head. A kind of intoxication of relief swept over him and held him dumb. He blew out the match clumsily.

"But your father called you Rose," Terry said. "Not Dawn."

The soft hair touched his cheek in the darkness for an instant, and thrilled him.

"It was all my fault, Terry. My full name is Rose Dawn Compton. Dad is old-fashioned and always gives me my first name. But I called myself Dawn to you because you named me the dawn girl that morning you carried me to the cottage. I was staying in Clairmont with an old nurse. You kept your full name a secret, so I hid mine. It was not until last week that I knew you were the Terry Wedderburn my father had spoken of."

The girl's voice faltered.

"Are you angry, Terry?"

"No," said Terry. Then, almost roughly. "Go on!"

He sat still. So it was the dawn girl who was willing to make that fair exchange of wealth for blood! He felt a bitter mirth at himself creep upon him and hurt him. Some dream seemed to break into ugly reality; what dream, Terry Wedderburn himself did not know at that moment. Then he saw the wild irony of his own thoughts. Had she not as much right to sell herself as he had?

"I have finished," Dawn said. "It is your turn."

Terry laughed savagely and recklessly to himself. His creed! Even to this girl who belonged to some shattered dream, he must apply it, to fulfill his destiny and save the pride of the Wedderburns.

"Your father and mine have arranged that we shall marry each other," he said. "It suits the convenience of both of them. I thought I was coming to the little fat lady—you remember her? I am glad it is you, instead, Dawn. Will you marry me?"

## CHAPTER II.

The honeymoon was over.

Dawn Wedderburn sat in the window-seat of the big house which had been old Ben Compton's wedding gift, and looked out into the sunny courtyard below. The day was one of pale wintry sunshine, and the great fireplace was piled high with glowing logs. Macallister, the terrier, slumbered before it, stretched on the bear-skin rug like a large shining slug.

Dawn turned quickly at the sound of a footstep. Terry stood there, broad-shouldered and gay in his riding habit. He strode forward and brushed her uplifted lips with his own.

"Hello!" he said. "Not coming to the meet?"

Dawn shook her head and smiled. Standing there, against the pale sunlight, her honey-colored hair had the look of a heavy aureole.

"No," she answered. "Gray Bess has a strained tendon this morning. She's the only mount I dare trust myself on in a wild field like the Beltane Valley. Besides, I've a lot of business to attend to and letters to write. You ought to meet your new neighbors to-day, Terry."

Terry frowned. Then he laughed, flinging back his head in his boyish, handsome way.

"You slave driver!" he said. "Tell 'em I'll call on each of them to-morrow. Anyhow, they're your neighbors, Dawn."

Dawn flushed. She wanted to forget that it was to her that her father had deeded the big house and its estate in the same careless gesture with which he had returned Wedderburn Chase to its owner.

"Good hunting, my dear!" she called, as Terry left the room.

The Beltane Valley pack was kept at White Pigeons. Dawn stood very still at the window and watched Terry and the huntsman, the center of a barking throng of hounds, pass out of the courtyard and down the long drive.

Long after the sound of their going had died away, Dawn Wedderburn continued to stand there.

At last she spoke aloud, her hand clenched at her side.

"I wonder if I sinned!" she whispered.

It was a month since the

***"Terry loved me, and he would have married me when I was free if you had not robbed me of him. Dawn, dear, let me have him. Don't struggle to keep him. You can't!"***

wedding. It had taken place at Winston on a morning of misty sunlight, with flags flying on every building in the town and a crowd of dirty-looking men and women—Ben Compton's employees—crowding eagerly around the entrance to the church and cheering the bridal couple loudly. She remembered Terry's bewildered amusement. There had been a honeymoon in France and Italy, then they had come home to White Pigeons.

As cold and clear as crystal, Dawn knew that she had married a man who did not love her. Not even on the rainy night that he had come to her, at her father's bidding, had she tried to deceive herself. With pitiless self-candor she knew that it was Ben Compton's heiress Terry had married. She was the little fat lady.

Dawn leaned her face against the mirror. Her eyes, like feverish stars, looked out at her.

"You did not sin, because you love him!" she whispered, in vehement answer to herself.

Her love was a thing that made her tremble. Yet out of it there came a wild hope that filled her heart. From her own overflowing treasury she would make Terry love her. She told herself that fiercely, and glowed for a moment as though she had already triumphed. She could do it—unless there was some other woman.

"There is no one else!" she said aloud. "He is not that kind!"

She looked into the mirror into her own eyes that were the soft blue-gray of a pebble, as though she would read there what scheme her soul had planned. He did not even know that she loved him—yet. He thought that it had been merely a cold-blooded proposition on her side as well as on his. Men like Terry were so often blind that way. What would happen when he did know?

Dawn felt like one who had adventured far and found herself suddenly cut off by the tide.

"You gambler!" she breathed, trembling. "You must pray to win!"

She started guiltily at a sound behind her, and a growl from Macallister. A girl stood in the doorway, looking at her; a slender elfish figure in a heavy fur coat.

"Pansy!" Dawn exclaimed.

Pansy Harkaway sank into a chair near the door with a tired sigh.

"I am cold, Dawn," she said, tears in her eyes. "I waited at the end of the drive until I saw Terry leave. Then I stole into the hall without any of the servants seeing me. Oh, I wish I were dead, Dawn!"

Dawn made a quick movement. Why her heart beat in sudden agony, just then, she never knew. It was half a year since she had seen Pansy Harkaway, young wife of the rich and elderly John Harkaway. The two girls had been friends at school and, ever afterward Pansy had clung to her in that childish helplessness which had always baffled Dawn with its bright, underlying hardness.

"Tell me, dear!" Dawn said, gently. She would have touched the petallike lips, but the girl shrank from her.

"Don't!" Pansy said, a husky note in her voice.

Dawn sat quite still. Pansy Harkaway had lifted her face, which was thin and peaked, despite her prettiness. Her mouth was a straight, quivering line, her violet eyes clouded with tears and full of hard enmity.

"I will tell you, then," she said. Her gloved hands firmly clutched the arms of her chair. "That is what I have come for. To tell you. I was in Italy with Jack when you married Terry. We only came back a few days ago. You know why I married. It was for money. I was bought and sold. Oh, I was satisfied with my price. Lots of girls have worse luck. Jack was kind, as kind as a—a grandfather. But he was horribly jealous. He kept me under

lock and key like a treasured jewel—which I wasn't."

Pansy's thin, tinkling laugh sounded ugly.

"Oh, I wasn't bad. You needn't think that. But I was young. One evening, when my husband was away, I sneaked out to a night club. I met a young man there who took me home. I saw him again after that—he belonged to a good family and was good-looking and lots of fun. Jack knew him well. But he did not know we were so friendly. At least, I thought he did not know."

The girl's voice dragged, frightened and desperate. Her eyes seemed to have grown too big for her face.

"But he did, Dawn! He had us watched. It was all so innocent, although the boy had fallen in love with me. I was starving for love. I did foolish things, though there was nothing wrong in any of them. And Jack was watching us all the time. He will not believe that there was nothing in it. He is too blind to listen. He has filed a petition for divorce against me and named this boy!"

Pansy Harkaway stopped. She looked at Dawn strangely, half-furtively.

"Why do you not ask what the boy's name is?" she asked in a half-fierce whisper.

Dawn rose. She was marble-white in the firelight.

"It was Terry Wedderburn!" Pansy said in a loud, shrill voice, when Dawn did not speak.

"I want to hear nothing about Terry's past!" Dawn whispered. "The past is over and—done with! He is my husband, now, Pansy! Please remember that!"

She stood with a coldness that was rather pitiful, looking down at Pansy Harkaway's head, with its fluffed brown tendrils of hair and shell-like ears. A dead and rather awful silence seemed to follow her words, which were frightened and defiant, because of the dread that deluged her all at once.

A sound that was like a wail broke from Pansy's lips. She sat huddled in the chair, and clenched her crushed handkerchief to her lips.

"It is not over and done with! Oh, don't you see that when Jack throws me off I shall be all alone in the world? Do you think I do not know that he was sold to you, just as I was sold to my husband, that he does not love you? Terry loved me, and he would have married me when I was free if you had not robbed me of him. Dawn, dear, let me have him. Don't struggle to keep him. You can't!"

Dawn looked out of the window to the green lawns of White Pigeons and the blue-gray mist of bare trees beyond. The sharp cry of the huntsman's horn and the far-away bay of the hounds reached her ears with a kind of grave mockery.

It was as though the careless voice of Terry called a good-by-forever to her as he rode away and left her alone in that splendid shell of a house, with the lamp of love, which she had meant to tend so carefully, blown out in her hand.

Pansy lifted her wet lashes. Suddenly she bent forward and caught both of Dawn's hands in her hot fingers.

"You would not keep a husband who did not love you, Dawn—not you," she said. "You were always so proud. I know what you thought of me when I married Jack, though you said nothing. Oh, I wish that I had not married him—old, stiff and cold as he is. But I never knew what love was until I met Terry. He taught me. If only I had not gone to Italy! I could have told you before it was too late. Poor Dawn!"

"You are mad!" Dawn exclaimed. "He is my husband!"

The pity in Pansy's eyes annoyed her. There was a touch of color in both her cheeks as though they had felt a real

***He wished her eyes could not read his soul so unerringly. He wished to hide his soul from her—and from himself.***

lash. Yet she knew that she was frightened—horribly frightened. She was young enough to feel a dull horror at Pansy Harkaway's words, at the deceptive tinsel in the girl's soul that rang like hard cold metal. How deep had the love of Terry Wedderburn and Pansy gone in the past that was not dead, innocent though it had been?

Dawn bent down and caressed Macallister's silky ears as the dog rubbed against her. Ben Compton had brought his daughter up in almost austere innocence. Sometimes she thought herself

old-fashioned. Yet she could feel no horror against Terry. Even for Pansy she could find some pity.

"You could keep him because he is your husband, and you are rich," Pansy said, slowly and bitterly. "You could do that, and make him hate you."

Dawn shivered. From herself she had hidden that fear—that Terry, from indifference might pass to hatred. Now that there was another woman, her glowing faith in her own power crumbled. She had not known as she watched Terry ride away a few minutes before, that there was another woman.

"I could make him love me!" she said.

Pansy Harkaway rose from the deep chair. She was like some feverish fairy at that moment, with the leaflike quivering of her slender body as she faced Dawn. Her tears were dried into a faint flush beneath each of her eyes, which were very bright.

"Dawn, dear, listen!" she said. "Do you know what I shall do when—if Jack wins his case and Terry does not stand by me? I shall take a dose of poison. I have already made inquiries to find out which drug was quickest and gave the least pain, and I have a bottle in my dressing table at this moment. I know it sounds like the movies, but it is the only kind of courage I have—cowardly courage. I am only telling you this to let you know how serious it is to me. It is not the disgrace I am thinking of. It is the thought of losing Terry."

Dawn moved to the window, and stood, the sunlight on her bright hair. How swiftly the sin she had committed in marrying with wide-open eyes a man who did not love her, had found her out! She had gambled everything upon winning him afterward. And already she had lost because he was in love with another woman. Something cried out within her that she could keep him because without her he would be a pauper. Then she thrust the humiliating thought back fiercely. Terry, quixotic and generous as he was careless, would not sell his sense of honor to her, though he might sell himself.

Dawn turned her gray eyes back to the room again. Pansy Harkaway watched her as, in silence, she moved into the pool of firelight.

"When will the case come up?" she asked. Her voice was cool and level.

Pansy Harkaway shrank. Yet, with an eager, hungry look she continued to watch Dawn.

"In two months I think," she answered. "Not before."

Dawn nodded. She spoke painfully, yet almost coldly.

"I am going to make a bargain with you," she said. "A kind of bargain I do not think any woman ever made before. You must promise me that you will have nothing to do with—with Terry for two months. You must leave him to me, and give me a fair chance. If at the end of that time Terry does not want to stay with me, I will let him come to you. I will make it easy for him. In fact I will make it impossible for him to stay with me."

She ended as steadily as she had begun. It was her biggest throw in all that blind gamble of love which she had embarked upon. In the silence that followed she heard the catch of breath that Pansy Harkaway made.

"I agree to your bargain!" Pansy finally replied, in a low voice.

She spoke swiftly, as though half-fearful. Her eyes searched Dawn's face with furtive and hidden passion.

"And now you must go," Dawn said.

An overmastering desire to be alone filled her. She felt as though some shameful sale had been effected that left her soiled. Yet—two months!

Terry Wedderburn strolled lazily into the breakfast room of White Pigeons. He stood upon the hearthrug and thrust his fingers through the short crisp curls that grew above him temples. Then he

glanced at the amber-faced clock and grinned.

"Late parties play the deuce with breakfast," he said. "You wonderful girl! What fairy's nest have you been robbing this morning?"

He bent down lightly and brushed Dawn's flushed cheek with his lips. She caught his hand for a moment, as it lay upon her shoulder and touched her lips to it in a quick, half-shy caress.

"I've been up for hours," Dawn replied. "And had a four-mile canter on Gray Bess. Late hours don't hurt me yet."

Her lips parted in the frank, serious curve which made her look so different from the other women of Terry Wedderburn's world. From the very first, when she had been the dawn girl, she had worried him, because she was so like a clear, tranquil pool that mirrored everything simply. In his idle world, it was a social sin to be grave or sincere, and men and women clutched always at a new cynicism to cloak their real souls with.

"Little sobersides!" Terry said, with his careless laugh.

Dawn watched him as he played with his breakfast. His joking did not hurt her. Sometimes her dimples answered his dancing blue eyes and the swift wit that old Ben Compton had bequeathed her amused him. But, she always felt like some actress who was playing a part.

The Beltane Valley hunt ball, the most brilliant function of the season, had passed brilliantly. Terry's five sisters—graceful and well-bred creatures—had been kind to Dawn, and the romping gayety of the affair had fascinated her. Old Ben Compton had been there, gruffly friendly with his son-in-law, and kindly tolerant of George Wedderburn, who had looked like some fragile and aristocratic Raeburn picture. Terry frowned with mingled amusement and anger as he remembered.

He wandered out into the stables after breakfast. His own ancestral home, the twisted chimneys of which were visible from the neighboring hill, four miles across country, was like a shabby and beetle-browed old puritan of a house compared with White Pigeons. Yet he loved it, as he could never love the splendid gift of Dawn's father's, with its clipped hedges and rolling lawns, and sun-warmed stone that flushed faintly through its centuries-old covering of ivy and clematis.

"Ungrateful hound!" he said, softly, to himself. Even yet, at times, the sense of humiliation and self-disgust gripped him.

He turned and saw Dawn standing at the open French window, dressed in her riding habit. He wondered, as he moved toward her, whether the theory of blood and breeding which he and his kind held, was always true. She had almond-shaped eyes and fine nostrils, and the poise of her head and body was as unconsciously graceful as that of a goddess.

"You bored thing!" Dawn said softly.

"I'm not!" Terry answered, almost crossly. He wished her eyes could not read his soul so unerringly. He wished to hide his soul from her—and from himself.

"I'm taking a run over to your father's place," Dawn said, flushing. "Your sisters asked me to, last night."

"I guess I'll run into town in the car," Terry answered. He did not notice her gloved hand clench and the moment's pause of her breathing at his words. The thought had stabbed her that Pansy Harkaway was in town.

The picture of Dawn clung to Terry's memory as he drove the heavy sports roadster along the wide State road.

It haunted him capriciously all through the long drive. He told himself, with a brutal taunt, as he turned into his club, that he must be falling in love with his wife.

It was his first visit to town since he had been married. The old bachelor fever caught him and held him, and when he turned his steps from the club, and made his way toward his old apartment in East Tenth Street, darkness had already fallen.

His man was out. The apartment looked dreary and dead. Terry walked through the place with a wry face. Upon the desk lay a single small, yellowish envelope, speckled with dust. He opened it idly.

HARKAWAY VS. HARKAWAY AND WEDDERBURN.

MR. TERRENCE WEDDERBURN,
2A East Tenth Street,
New York, N. Y.

DEAR SIR: In regard to the above petition for divorce in which you are cited, we are instructed by our client, John Harkaway, Esquire, to request you to be good enough to make an appointment to meet him at our offices at your earliest convenience.

Yours truly,
MAIDEN, CHANCERY & MAIDEN.

The letter dropped from Terry's hand. He saw mechanically that the envelope bore the date of his marriage to Dawn. It had lain there, awaiting him, since then.

"Some awful mistake!" he muttered.

He frowned down at the short letter. Suddenly he started.

"My heavens!" he said. "Pansy!"

He was aware that his face was cold and wet with shock for all his careless indifference to life.

"Corespondent!" Terry whispered, with a harsh laugh at the ugly word. "And Pansy——"

His jaw set in a hard and dogged line. It seemed to him that in that quiet room, he heard all the world ringing with laughter at him.

At that moment, he heard a soft footfall and the click of an opened door. Swinging around, Terry saw that a girl stood within the room.

"Terry!" she said, softly.

It was Pansy Harkaway. She was wrapped in a coat that half hid her face, and her small black hat was pulled down to her eyebrows. She closed the door softly.

"I saw a light, and I came up," she said. "I have been waiting for the chance to see you for ages. Oh, Terry, dear, I am going mad. What are we going to do?"

"Sit down, Pansy," Terry said.

She had come very close to him, her face, in all its flushed and bright-eyed piquancy, uplifted to his, her slender body waiting as though for him to take it in his arms. Thus, on that night when they had first met at the night club, she had clung to him in terror then.

Terry's memory went back swiftly. By mere accident he had drifted into the rather notorious place, and found her struggling like a bird in the arms of a handsome young fool who had drunk too much champagne. He had knocked the youngster down and taken Pansy home. In his happy-go-lucky way, he had met her often since then. He had known she was called Harkaway, but not for one wild moment had he thought she was the wife of John Harkaway, blind and reckless fool that he always had been.

"I have only just seen this," Terry said, steadily. "I did not know you were married. Married women usually wear a ring. I never saw one on your finger."

"I took it off," Pansy said, slowly. "But I thought you knew, I was sure you knew, Terry. I am sorry if you think I have deceived you."

Her head drooped a little wearily. Yet her heart was beating fiercely. Before men, she could always act with a conviction that almost deceived herself. Not for a second had she meant to keep her bargain with Dawn. In love there was no bargaining. And she loved Terry Wedderburn with all the passion of her starved and selfish soul.

Terry crushed the letter into his pocket. His blue eyes were cold.

"You were wrong to come here tonight," he said. "Whatever spies your husband may have employed, have probably seen you. The world is pretty rotten when it begins to think that way. But now you are here, we will go together and see John Harkaway. He will withdraw the case when we prove to him how innocent it all was."

Terry ended awkwardly. The distant roar of the traffic came dully in the silence that followed his words.

Pansy Harkaway rose slowly from the chair. She swayed a little toward Terry.

"I don't want him to withdraw the case, Terry!" she said, a low husky-sweet note in her voice. "Oh, don't you see! I hate him! I want him to divorce me!"

For an instant recklessness and passion had completely carried her away. Then she stood, deadly-white at the sound and meaning of her own words. Terry Wedderburn had stiffened. She saw, suddenly, the masculine suspicion that made him look stern and cold.

"You want your husband to divorce you?" Terry repeated slowly. "Why?"

Until that moment he had always treated her as merely an amusing child and comrade. Pansy caught the new note which has tone held. Yet, even the touch of steel in his manner made her thrill.

"I hate him!" she said, again.

Terry flushed. A sudden desire possessed him to leave those quiet rooms which were like a trap that closed slowly about him.

"I am married," he said, stiffly. "No doubt you have heard. My wife is Dawn Compton. I think you know her."

Pansy stood very still. Yet from the momentary brown hardness of her eyes, which had been swimming an instant before, Terry knew that she knew. He forced himself to laugh lightly.

"This is rather like a scene from a modern play," he continued, with an effort at banter. "It is all nonsense about you hating your husband, you know. I'm going to take you back to him now, to explain. Unless he is a fool he will believe you and forgive you when you confess you have been foolish——"

Terry's words were cut short. At that moment, the long trill of the doorbell echoed through the apartment.

"Hang it!" Terry said, frowning.

Pansy shrank against the wall, listening. Again the bell rang imperatively. It seemed to flood Terry Wedderburn's rooms with sound.

"Don't go, Terry!" Pansy whispered.

Even as the words left her Terry shook off her hand and started toward the door.

Pansy stood shaking. At heart she was a coward, though she would gamble recklessly to gain her own ends. Terry's suggestion that they should go together to her husband and confess the feather-brained innocence of her conduct had brought her schemes tumbling momentarily to the ground. She knew that life with her husband again was unthinkable for her. She wanted to kill the past. Her love for Terry Wedderburn had in it the passion of a fickle child for a new playmate. Yet she wanted no one to find her at that moment in Terry's apartment.

She looked desperately around her. The door of a darkened room was half open. With a gulp of fear and excitement, Pansy hurried through it.

At the apartment door at that moment stood a broad-shouldered elderly man with close-cut, iron-gray hair, and the thin, ascetic face of an artist. Terry Wedderburn faced him with slow, watchful eyes.

"Mr. John Harkaway, I think," he said.

He turned abruptly and led the way into the lighted sitting room. The realization that Pansy had hidden herself

***By mere accident he had drifted into the notorious place, and found her youngster down and***

came with a feeling of annoyed amusement. Even yet, Terry thought of her as little more than a willful child whom he could have handed back to her husband with a frank explanation of his friendship with her.

"I followed my wife here," John Harkaway said, slowly.

At the dead, ice-cold words, Terry turned. He saw then, that the face was gray and set like a mask. His mouth, beneath its sweeping mustache, was a

***struggling in the arms of a handsome young fool. He had knocked the taken Pansy home.***

thin line that betrayed no emotion. His voice came again with an utter absence of all passion that made it sound terrible.

"I expect she is in hiding, here. If she is listening she may rest quite safe. I shall not stir from this room to look for her. My business is with you, Wedderburn. I have known about your friendship with my wife for some time. Before I went abroad I was keeping careful note of it. Old men have to

watch their young wives, you know, and perhaps I have absorbed some Italian ideas in this respect. I was content to get my satisfaction through the law, until——"

"Until when?" Terry asked when he hesitated. The thought that John Harkaway was crazy came to him.

"Until I found that you had married Ben Compton's daughter. Until I learned that you had discovered a rich woman to live upon like the worthless dog you are. Strange how an offended husband sometimes thinks of his wife's future, even when she is no good! It is a common custom in modern society to take away another man's wife. But it is also the custom, among gentlemen, to marry the woman when she gets her freedom. You are no sportsman, Wedderburn. You have dodged your punishment."

An ironic smile twitched the older man's lips. Terry's face had flushed a deep red at his words. With a great effort he kept his control.

"The friendship of Mrs. Harkaway and myself has been an utterly innocent one," he said slowly and laboriously. "There are hundreds of similar friendships. Only a man who was blind with jealousy would have seen wrong in it and acted as you have done. To-night she is—was—here because you have frightened her out of her wits and she wanted my advice. If you are fool enough to want me to swear to her innocence, I will do so!"

Terry ended curtly. An impulse caught him to drag Pansy out from her hiding-place. Then he saw that his visitor, like a piece of granite, was waiting for him to finish.

"So," said Harkaway, as though Terry had never spoken, "if only because you have made a fool of two women, Wedderburn, I think I am justified in anticipating the law. I am going to horsewhip you. I am going to give you the punishment you deserve."

John Harkaway flung open his heavy coat. Terry, white as paper, saw the uplifted arm and the swinging lash. A twinge of utterly unexpected pity for the man swept across him. He caught Harkaway's arm almost gently as it came down, and, with a single twist of his iron-strong wrist, flung the whip aside.

"I think you had better go," he said, "before we both make greater fools of ourselves!"

He stood stiffly against the open door, without looking again at Harkaway. He knew that the flare-up of passion had gone, that the man whom the world knew as a frigid ascetic was trembling like a broken soul on the brink of a pit of jealousy and pain such as ordinary men rarely glimpsed.

Harkaway's head had drooped. His hand trembled as he groped for the balustrade; his steps died away down the stairs. Terry closed the door mechanically, and leaned against it, his jaw set. His soul stung with the lash of Harkaway's words, salted by the truth that lurked in them. He seemed all at once to have dragged Dawn's name deep in the mire, beyond any cleaning.

Pansy had stolen out of her hiding place, her eyes wide, her hair dishevelled.

"Terry!" she said. "Oh, I was frightened."

Terry took her arm.

"We have been here long enough," he said, with a grimly ironic laugh. "The voice of scandal will begin to mutter into its beard if we stay here any longer."

They stood in a quiet street, a few moments later. In a tense silence which Pansy dared not break, Terry hailed a taxi, and thrust her into it.

She leaned out of the cab, her eyes limpid yet dry.

"You will not leave me to face the storm alone?" she asked piteously.

Terry caught her wrist for an instant. Pansy Harkaway winced at his strong and almost brutal grasp.

"I shall not leave you alone," he replied. "Butterflies cannot face storms —butterflies like you. The male variety, such as myself, are tougher. We've got to convince your husband that it is all a mistake—if he is not too crazy. We've got to prove to him that never was anything of—of—love"—he stumbled clumsily on the word—"between us. If he won't believe us, then——"

He shrugged his shoulders carelessly and as he did so he noted the eager, white smudge of Pansy's face against the black interior of the cab. His anger at her, at himself, and at the world, which set so many traps to catch careless young men, made him feel cruel.

"Then I shall have to stand by you and see that you do not suffer, both for the sake of my name and that of Dawn, my wife," he finished.

Pansy leaned back in the humming darkness of the cab as it started, her cheeks stinging, her hands clenched. Terry's last words had fallen upon her ears like a blow, yet in some strange fashion she loved his blows.

A faint smile curved her red lips. The night had not been unprofitable to her plans. If her husband persisted in his action, and he would, Terry Wedderburn, who came of a quixotic race, would stand by her and before he knew it, he would be in love with her, and Dawn would have lost him.

"Two months!" Pansy's thoughts went on. "And some of it is already gone! He is not in love with Dawn. She admitted it. If he does not love her she will let me have him. She promised. And she always kept a promise. Poor little fool!"

Pansy Harkaway laughed softly and then was grave again. Quite clearly she saw her own tinsel soul, which never in its life had been thwarted, and knew no honor.

"I have won the first round!" she whispered to herself.

TO BE CONTINUED.

## EVENING

THE stars are like a golden rain,
The wind is like an infant's prayer,
And very soon I'll know again
Your hands and voice, your lips and hair!

The moon is like a scimitar,
The scent of clover passing sweet,
And oh, my dear, where e'er you are
May love put wings upon your feet!

May love lend every haste to lead
You back to me and back to rest—
And back to all that you shall need
Within my arms, against my breast!

GLORIA BERTHALL.

# Freed By Love

## By Mona Morrow

TWO deep-blue eyes, soft and serious, stared at Maxine Cortland over the top of a newspaper, as she came down the stairs from the mezzanine balcony to the hotel lobby.

Maxine was more or less accustomed to having men stare at her. Her beauty was of the type which caught the eye quickly. Her hair was the color of sunbeams, her eyes were like pansies, and her mouth was an interesting and intriguing study in scarlet. She was slender and beautifully formed, and walked with the lithe grace of twenty.

Now, as at all other times, she paid no attention to the men who lounged in the lobby. She detested living in a hotel for that very reason. But circumstances forced her to stay there against her will.

At the cigar counter, waiting patiently, was her fiancé, Howard Landis. He was tall, fairly handsome, and dark-haired. His brown eyes seemed very innocent and confiding at one moment, and very cruel and cunning the next. They were always on the alert, watching and observing. The little incident of the young man's staring intensely at Maxine had not escaped their notice. A mental note was made of it for future profit.

Maxine forced a smile to her lips as she joined Howard. As he took hold of her arm, she shrank the least bit under his touch. She hated this man, and yet she had to go with him.

They walked east toward Broadway, and stopped in front of a motion-picture theater. Howard purchased two tickets, and they went in.

A celebrated Irish tenor was appearing in his first talking picture. On the concert stage his voice had charmed millions, and as it now came from the screen, it thrilled Maxine. She was so entranced that she even forgot that Howard Landis was sitting beside her.

Then the hero on the screen said to the girl he loved: "Some day I shall pour the gold of the world into your lap."

Maxine felt her heart jump at the sound of those word. They were very similar to words that had once been written to her, words that brought back poignant memories, dreams of love and romance, a world of unfulfilled hope.

In her room, in a small metal box where she kept treasured letters and mementos, there were three post cards tucked into three envelops. She had received the first when she was fourteen years old, the second when she was fifteen, and the third when she was sixteen. On each one of the cards the anonymous sender had written the words:

Some day I shall lay my heart and the gold of the world in your lap.

Maxine had no doubt that it was an old quotation. It sounded rather quaint and heroic. But it seemed very uncanny to hear part of the words spoken from the screen. It brought back memories.

When she had received the first card, she had spent hours studying the handwriting, but failed to recognize it. Despite her tender age—she was only fourteen—she had considered the card as something very serious, very sweet, and very touching. For fear that others might laugh at it, she had showed it to no one. She treasured it secretly, wondering all the while who her unknown admirer was.

She watched all the boys she knew. Sooner or later, she thought, the writer would betray himself. He might whisper the words into her ear while they were dancing, or choose some other means for letting her know his identity.

But the writer had remained a mystery even to that very day. She had woven glorious dreams about him, and when she had found herself deep in trouble she had prayed fervently that he would come to her.

For four years she had not heard from him. Sometimes she thought it was a practical joke played upon her by one of her school chums, but that thought never lived long. A school chum would have quickly betrayed herself. She would have wanted to get a laugh out of her work.

Maxine felt that whoever had written those cards had been in deadly earnest. It sent a pleasant glow over her to feel that some one was worshiping her from afar, striving to get the gold of the world to lay in her lap. She was a very sensitive creature, and the very thought of him brought a sweet little pang to her heart.

Oh, if he would only come now! She didn't care if he had no gold at all. If he would only be her friend! She needed some one to talk to, some one to confide in, some one to help her.

Although she wore no engagement ring—and it would have been like lead on her finger had Howard given her one—still she was his fiancée. It was the price she was paying for her brother Stanley's freedom.

When she had been eighteen and Stanley twenty-one, their parents had died. They had been living at the time in a small town in Illinois where they were considered the first family. They had been the wealthiest and the most prominent socially.

After inheriting the money, they had come to New York, prior to going abroad. That trip to Europe never materialized. In some manner Howard Landis struck up an acquaintance with Stanley, and they became fast friends.

Maxine had objected from the start. She disliked Howard the moment she set eyes on him. But Stanley overruled all objections. He felt flattered that Howard, who seemed to know every one and everything in New York, should take a fancy to him.

Howard, in his suave and polished manner, showed Stanley how easy it was to make money in Wall Street. Stanley was amazed at the quick profits Howard made for him. The lust for money burned in his blood. Howard assured him that if they plunged more heavily they could make millions.

A company was organized with Stanley as the president. Instead of making millions, Stanley lost almost all of his inheritance. And besides, a man he did not know as Howard's friend, tricked him into doing something which made him liable to a prison sentence.

Howard, with pretended magnanimity, offered to silence the man at the cost of his own fortune, if Maxine would consent to be his fiancée. What could Maxine do? If she refused it meant prison for Stanley. She had to agree, even though she hated the man with every drop of her blood.

What hurt most was the fact that Stanley still believed in Howard. He still believed that Howard was his best friend and that he would help them gain their fortune.

Maxine secured a position as salesgirl in a fashionable shop. The pay was small, but it was enough to live on. She wanted to move to a little apartment, but Stanley, persuaded by Howard, insisted that they keep their two rooms in the hotel. She never could understand why, but the day after he took her to the theater to hear the Irish tenor, she learned the reason.

At seven o'clock that evening he knocked at her door. Maxine was very much surprised to see him in evening clothes. So far as she could remember, they had made no engagement for the evening. Even though she hated him, she had to admit to herself that he looked very handsome in black and white. It gave him an air of aristocracy and prosperity.

"I have a little surprise for you," he said. "I met an old friend of mine to-day, and I asked him to have dinner with us this evening. I wish you'd wear that black velvet gown. You always look stunning in it."

Maxine didn't care to go, but knowing from past experience that Howard would not take no for an answer, she nodded her head.

"I'll go into Stanley's room while you dress," he said.

Half-heartedly she went to the closet to get the black velvet gown. It was a Paris importation from her prosperous days. It was cut daringly low in the back, but Maxine could well afford to wear it. Her skin was marvelously white and glowed with a healthy pink tint. She displayed an exquisite pair of shoulders and a well-formed back. The black of the gown formed a striking contrast to her golden hair.

"If you don't mind," Howard said to her as they left her room, "I didn't tell him that you were my fiancée. I have certain reasons which I don't think would interest you, so I wish you wouldn't mention it either."

Maxine smiled inwardly. There was no fear of her bragging about it. She wasn't at all proud of the honor.

When they stepped out of the elevator into the lobby, a young man came toward them. The moment she looked into his deep-blue eyes Maxine recognized him. Those were the same eyes that had stared at her over the newspaper the day before. He was tall and very good-looking. His dark, sandy hair was brushed back very smartly from a fine, high forehead. There was something very friendly about his face. His mouth was full and turned up very pleasantly at the corners. When he

***He didn't say a word. He was afraid to trust himself to speak while holding her in his arms.***

smiled, he revealed two rows of dazzling white teeth.

"I rather like him," Maxine thought, "but I suppose there's something wrong with him if he's Howard's friend."

"Hello, Roy," Howard greeted him cheerfully. "I want you to meet Miss Cortland. Maxine, this is Roy Dillon."

Presently they were seated at a table in the grill room of the hotel. What Maxine thought would prove to be a boring evening turned out to be otherwise. Roy Dillon was a very interesting person. For a young man of twenty-six, he had done an amazing number of things.

She realized now that when he had stared at her in the lobby, it had not been with the idea of flirting. He was not of that type; he was every inch a gentleman. If he had forgotten himself for the moment and stared at her rudely, it was only because he had been overwhelmed by her beauty and her charm.

She noticed that he directed all his conversation to her. It was flattering. Once or twice she glanced at Howard. There was a smug smile on his face, showing that he did not resent his friend's interest in his fiancée.

Maxine was enthralled listening to Roy. His struggle for an education was very dramatic. He had been poor. He had worked his way through college by tending furnaces, serving as a waiter, and doing all sorts of odd jobs. Her eyes showed plainly that she admired him for his courage.

The band struck up a lively tune.

"You dance, don't you, Roy?" Howard asked.

"Why, yes."

"I don't go in for it much," Howard declared, "so if you'd care to dance with Maxine, go ahead."

Roy's eyes turned to Maxine eagerly. "Shall we?" he asked in a voice that sounded as if she would be conferring a great favor upon him.

She smiled as she rose from her chair. With his finger tips he touched her arm as he led her to the dance floor. A pleasant thrill went through Maxine. There was no urge in her to shrink back as there was when Howard touched her. Instinctively she felt that this man was clean and admirable.

But still, she couldn't reconcile herself to the fact that he was Howard's friend. There was something strange about the meeting. Howard seemed to derive satisfaction from the fact that Roy was interested in her, and it seemed rather pointed that Howard should have deliberately asked them to dance with each other. Why had he done it?

Roy took her in his arms as if she were some precious thing. The sweetness and the loveliness of her caused his face to flush. They glided over the floor as if they had always danced together.

He didn't say a word. He was afraid to trust himself to speak while holding her in his arms. These were enchanting moments, and they would only be spoiled by trite conversation.

When the music paused before the encore, they stood and looked into each other's eyes.

"That was lovely," Maxine said in all sincerity.

She had been unhappy for so long that this little bit of happiness—meeting some one who was nice and pleasant, and who danced so well—just filled her heart.

"I enjoyed it very much," he said warmly.

The music started and they danced again.

"How long have you known Howard?" Maxine asked.

"Why, I just met him this morning," Roy answered. "We started talking to each other in the lobby of the hotel. He's a rather friendly sort. I'm all alone in the city, and I guess he took pity on me and invited me to dinner. I owe him a thousand thanks for a very pleasant evening. And I hope you'll both come and have dinner with me to-morrow."

Maxine was stunned. It meant that Howard had lied to her. He had told her that Roy was an old friend of his, whereas he was only a picked-up acquaintance in the hotel lobby, a perfect stranger. And yet Howard had asked her to wear her black velvet gown so she would look particularly stunning, and he had deliberately forced her to dance with this man.

Now she understood why he had asked her not to mention that she was his fiancée. He must have seen the man staring at her the day before. He must

have decided to profit by the man's interest.

Suddenly she felt very much degraded. Howard was using her as a decoy. He was going to utilize Roy's interest in her, and there was no doubt of that interest for he showed it plainly every time he looked at her. The result would be that Howard would ensnare Roy as he had ensnared Stanley, and he would probably cheat him of his money.

It was a shameful thing, and she did not want to be a partner to it. She wouldn't care to help cheat any one, especially Roy. There was something about him that stirred her heart. In the short while that they had been together, she had felt a delicious peace, a perfect harmony sweeping over her. He was the type of man she could love. But of course that was out of the question. She was Howard's fiancée, and she would have to remain such as long as he held the evidence which could send Stanley to prison. That was the whip with which he drove her.

When the dance ended they returned to Howard's table. It was hard for Maxine to appear unconcerned when she knew that Roy would be another one of Howard's victims. She wished she were alone now so she could think.

"I was telling Miss Cortland," Roy said, "that I would like you both to go to dinner with me to-morrow."

"Thanks," Howard answered quickly, before Maxine could plead another engagement. "We'll be glad to accept."

That night Maxine lay awake a long time, thinking. Something must be done. She must prevent Howard from fleecing Roy. Upstairs in his room in the same hotel, Roy was probably sleeping peacefully, not knowing the danger he was in.

A sad smile played upon her lips. Perhaps he was awake, too, thinking of her. She remembered the touch of his fingers on her hand when he had said good night. There was something in his eyes that had made her heart pound. She could feel his gaze following her until the elevator door shut her from his sight.

When she awoke in the morning, her problem was still unsolved. She feared Howard, and if he learned that she had spoiled his game, there was no telling what he might do. Still, she must warn Roy.

At seven o'clock Howard called for her to take her to dinner. In the lobby they met Roy. Maxine's heart ached when she saw how his face brightened up at the sight of her. He looked at her as if she were the most desirable girl in the world. She knew then, as if he had told her in so many words, that he had fallen madly in love with her.

At the table he again directed all his conversation to her. Occasionally, since he was the host, he spoke to Howard. He urged them both to order the choicest dishes.

When the music played he tried hard not to show his eagerness. He yearned to take her in his arms again and dance. And when he asked her, his voice was a bit unsteady.

Maxine rose gladly. This was her chance to talk to him, to warn him. Soon they were among the host of dancers.

"How long are you going to stay in New York?" she asked.

"That doesn't depend upon me," he said significantly, as he looked into her eyes. "It may be a week, a month, or a year. I don't care how long it takes if I'm successful."

She was compelled to turn her head. His eyes were doing something very strange to her. She felt all her pulses quicken, felt waves of heat sweeping over her. His words sounded as if his stay in New York depended on her.

Oh, she mustn't let herself go! She mustn't fall in love with him. What would be the use? Nothing could come

of it. She belonged to Howard; she was his, just as if he had bought her. And he had bought her with the price of her brother's freedom.

"You're not thinking of going into any business while you're in New York, are you?" she asked.

"No. I have all my connections in Chicago."

"You wouldn't go into a business unless you had it thoroughly investigated, would you?"

"Of course not. Why do you ask?"

"No particular reason," she answered quickly. "But men sometimes do those things and—well, I wouldn't want you to do it."

"Why are you telling me this?" He turned to her with questioning eyes.

"Please don't ask me." Her eyes

***"Oh, I feel like a worm! I know that you tied up with Howard just to save my worthless neck. But that's over. You're going to get your chance to be happy."***

were pleading. "And please don't repeat it. But you will remember, won't you?"

"I will," he answered thoughtfully.

She felt much happier when she returned to the table. She had warned Roy. He would remember it when Howard tried to interest him in some business offering him the empty title of president as he had with Stanley.

She had faith that Roy would not fall as easily as Stanley. He was much brighter than her brother. And now that he had been warned he would be doubly cautious.

At work the next day the proprietor asked Maxine to bring him one of the red dresses that had just come in that morning. She went to the stock room and returned with a dress.

"What's the matter, Maxine?" the proprietor demanded. "Are you in love? I ask for a red dress and you bring me a blue one."

Maxine turned crimson. She stammered her apologies, and went back for the red dress.

All day long the proprietor's words haunted her. She tried to deny them, but it was impossible. She was in love —hopelessly in love with Roy. Every fiber of her being cried out for Roy, and the love that could never be hers.

Her brother Stanley was in her room when she got home. He was blond, just a trifle darker than Maxine, and he was handsome, but his chin showed plainly the weakness of his character. He was older than Maxine, and yet he depended upon her.

"There's a little surprise for you," he remarked, as he pointed to the table.

Maxine found a dainty box tied with ribbon. When she opened it, she gasped. In the box were orchids—beautiful orchids that were sent by Roy.

Forgetting that Stanley was there, she pressed her lips to the flowers. Her eyes became moist with tears, and if such things are possible, her heart wept.

"I want to talk to you," she suddenly heard Stanley say in a strange voice.

She turned around and saw him standing tense with his fists clenched.

"You love him," Stanley said, "and he loves you. I saw you both in the grill. Please don't try to deny it. I could read it in both your eyes. You can't hide it. It's something that's bigger than you are. He'd marry you in a minute if you said yes. But you can't because of me.

"Oh, I feel like a worm! I know that you tied up with Howard just to save my worthless neck. But that's over. You're going to get your chance to be happy."

She ran over to him and seized his arm.

"You're crazy, Stanley," she cried out. "I don't love him at all. I wouldn't care if I never saw him again."

"You're not telling the truth," he hurled at her. "You're thinking of me again. But I've made up my mind. I'm going to stand up and take my medicine like a man. You're through with Howard, do you understand? He can do with me whatever he pleases, but you're going to get your chance."

"No, no, Stanley. You mustn't do it."

She saw visions of Stanley in prison. How could she be happy if her happiness was secured at such a sacrifice? He was all she had in the world. No, no, she couldn't bear to be separated from him. Her happiness would turn to something bitter.

Still, her heart beat with joy at the sound of Stanley's words. He seemed like a new man now. The weakling had turned into a hero. Oh, she was glad to see that he had some real character. If he were only given the chance, he would amount to something some day. She knew now that he meant what he said, but she would never permit him to go through with it.

"You can't stop me!" He spoke like

one inspired. "I'm going to do it. But I'm going to warn Roy first about the stock Howard is trying to sell him."

"Stock?" Maxine asked.

"Yes. Howard is trying to sell him some mining stock that isn't worth the paper it's written on. He's got a fine story trumped up, too. He's telling Roy that the stock really belongs to you, although he has it, and that by buying it, Roy would be helping you.

"Oh, don't you see how rotten Howard is? He used you as a trap to catch Roy. But this is the last time he'll ever use you for a purpose like that. I'll let him send me away, but I'll beat him up before I go so that he'll remember it for the rest of his life. I was looking for him all day, but I couldn't find him."

He went over to the telephone and picked the receiver off the hook. Maxine ran over and placed her hand over the mouthpiece.

"What are you going to do?" she demanded.

"I'm going to call up Roy and tell him."

"Don't," she said. "I don't think it's at all necessary, Stanley. Roy won't buy the stock."

"Why not?"

"Because I warned him."

"Oh!" Stanley's eyes brightened. "You did? And you're trying to tell me that you don't love him?"

"I do love him," she answered simply. There was no use denying it. "But I want you to stay out of it. I want to do this in my own way. I have a little plan. I can't explain it to you now. Just be patient for a little while, Stanley. Everything will turn out all right. We'll be happy. Promise me that you won't do anything rash—that you'll wait a few days!"

He promised and she patted his arm. "Cheer up," she said. "The sun hasn't stopped shining. We'll come out on top yet. Now run along."

But in her heart there was dark despair. She had no plan. She had no means of getting the upper hand on Howard. The future looked very gloomy. It was worse now that she was in love. But she had to keep Stanley back. She couldn't permit him to make the sacrifice. It would spoil his whole life.

However, she must save the man she loved from Howard. She hoped that Roy had heeded her warning. But still, Howard was a persuasive talker. He might get Roy to buy the stock even against his better judgment.

She went to the telephone and asked the hotel operator to connect her with Roy Dillon's room. The operator rang for several moments, and then told her that there was no answer.

Maxine decided to call him again later. She wondered what Roy must think of her. On the face of it, it looked as if she was one of a band of crooks. Howard had made her appear very common. He had picked up an acquaintance with Roy and had actually thrown Maxine at his head. Then he had tried to unload stock on him. But the orchids! Surely if Roy thought that of her, he wouldn't send her orchids. She derived a little comfort from the flowers. But the thought entered her mind that perhaps Roy had sent the flowers before Howard had tried to sell him the stock. Oh, she didn't want Roy to think ill of her.

Several times that evening she tried his room, but there was no answer.

Early in the morning she tried him again with no results. She inquired of the desk clerk before she left the hotel.

"He didn't come home last night," the clerk informed her. "His key is still in the box."

Fear gripped Maxine's heart. Could something have happened to him? He was alone in the city, and if something did happen, there would be no one to notify. She would never know.

She put through a miserable day in the shop where she was employed. She called the hotel a number of times, but Roy had not returned.

She tried to get in touch with Howard. Perhaps he knew something about Roy. She would question him very diplomatically so he would never suspect her real interest. But Howard's number did not answer. It seemed very strange that both men should be missing.

Before she left the shop, although she had no hope at all, she called the hotel. When she heard the click of the receiver being taken off the hook and the cheerful "Hello!" he called out, her heart almost stopped.

"Roy!" she cried out with a gladness that came from the bottom of her heart.

***"I've been in love with you since you were a little girl. You were awfully sweet then, but you're much sweeter now."***

"Maxine!" There was incredulous wonder in his voice. "You've been trying to get me?"

"Yes, I must speak to you, Roy. Please wait for me."

Something that sounded like: "Forever!" came to her over the wire. She hung up the receiver and walked out of the shop.

It was then that she suddenly remembered that she had called him Roy. It was the first time she had severed the barriers of formality. Not that she hadn't wanted to from the first moment she saw him, but because she felt it could end in no good.

She wondered if he had noticed the tone of gladness in her voice. Oh, she couldn't hide it. She was so terribly glad that he was alive, that she could hear his voice again.

But hadn't that betrayed her? Hadn't that told him that she loved him?

She made up her mind to act very cool when she saw him. Nothing could come of their love. She was bound to Howard. Should she attempt to desert him, he would take his revenge on Stanley.

Very timidly she tapped on Roy's door. As if he had been standing there waiting for her, the door opened immediately. It was so abrupt and so unexpected that she started.

"I'm very sorry." His deep-blue eyes were all apologies. "I didn't mean to frighten you. Won't you come in?"

She stepped into the room and sank down in the armchair. He sat down opposite her. His eyes were shining with love. They rested on her face like a sweet caress.

She found it hard to meet his gaze. She was afraid that he would read her secret—that she loved him with all her heart and always would.

"May I ask you a question?" he said.

"Yes."

"Just how friendly are you with Howard Landis?" he asked.

Now, she felt, was the time to tell him the truth. It would be a shock to him, but it would send him away—out of her life forever. And once he was gone, Stanley would realize that his sacrifice would be futile.

"Howard is my fiancé," she answered coldly.

His face turned a sickly white. His whole body drooped. He looked like a man who had received the cruelest blow of his life.

"Your fiancé?" he repeated incredulously. "I don't understand. He told me that you were just a good friend of his. I can't believe that you're telling me the truth. You can't—you don't love him, do you?"

"Howard is my fiancé," she repeated.

For a long time he sat motionless. Her heart went out to him. She suffered just as much as he did. But there was nothing to be done.

Finally he turned to her. "You wanted to tell me something?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered. "Did Howard try to sell you any stock?"

Roy nodded his head.

"Then please don't buy it. It's worthless."

His eyes widened as he stared at her.

"You're a little late," he said. "I've already bought it."

"But I warned you," she cried out. "Don't you remember the time we danced together?"

He jumped up from his chair.

"There's something wrong here," he said. "I suspected it all the time. But then I only thought he was your friend, although I couldn't imagine how in the world you would choose him for a friend. Maxine"—he looked straight into her eyes—"a girl doesn't warn another man against her fiancé, especially if that other man was a total stranger to her only a few days ago. I'm your friend, Maxine. I'd give everything I have to help you. If you're in trouble, tell me."

"There's nothing to tell," she answered. "I only wish that you'd go away, go back to where you came from."

"I don't want to go back." His voice was plaintive. "I came to New York to find you."

"To find me?" she asked in amazement.

"Yes. I've been in love with you since you were a little girl. I remember you when you wore long blond curls, and you rode through town in a little pony cart. You were awfully sweet then, but you're much sweeter now."

She stared at this man who brought back memories of her happy childhood. She tried to think back but she couldn't remember ever having seen him.

"I feel ashamed," she said, "that you should remember me so well and that I shouldn't remember you."

He smiled at her tenderly.

"It's not surprising," he said. "I lived on the wrong side of the tracks. My folks were very poor and your folks were very rich. We never met. I used to hide behind a post when you drove by. I didn't want you to see me. I was so shabby.

"But I used to dream of you. You were my princess. I vowed that I'd make something of myself—I'd be rich some day; I'd wipe out the difference in our stations. And in my dreams you fell in love with me."

Maxine felt her heart trembling. She was overwhelmed by the sweetness and the tenderness of his confession. This man whom she loved had always been in love with her. She had been his inspiration. He had struggled and fought for an education and for wealth only because of her.

Something stirred in her memory. "Roy," she cried out, "did you send me those three post cards?"

His heart leaped. "You remember?"

"Oh, how I've cherished them," she said frankly. "I still have them. 'Some day,' she quoted, 'I shall lay my heart and the gold of the world in your lap.'"

"I got it out of a book," he said. "It sounded wonderful to me then, but I didn't realize what a tremendous goal it was. I haven't all the gold of the world, but what I have, together with my heart, is yours now."

They were caught in the spell of the moment. He raised her from the chair, took her in his arms, and kissed her. Happily she clung to him, responding with all her heart to the fervor of his kisses.

"Tell me that you love me," he pleaded. "I've been waiting so long to hear it."

Her hands touched his cheeks. "I love you, dearest. I love you."

Suddenly she tore herself from his embrace.

"I was a fool to let myself go," she said. "We can't be anything to each other."

"Why not?" he demanded.

Her voice was filled with sobs as she told him of Howard and the hold he had on her.

She was surprised at the smile on Roy's face when she finished. Didn't he understand what it meant?

"There's nothing to worry about," he assured her. "I can take care of Howard very nicely. Now you can understand that it wasn't just a case of coincidence that I happened to be at the hotel. I had come here deliberately to find you. A friend back home told me where you were stopping.

"I intended to call on you, mention the names of some mutual friends, and strike up a friendship. But when Howard deliberately sought me out in the lobby and invited me to have dinner with you and him, I decided not to mention the friends. I was rather suspicious of Howard's sudden interest in me. I felt that he had a motive."

"And I suppose you thought I was an adventuress," Maxine interrupted.

"No, but I did feel that you were in the wrong company. And when you warned me about going into a strange business without investigating, I felt certain that you were going with Howard against your will, that no matter what happened, you weren't part of the conspiracy.

"He offered me the stock. I paid him a thousand dollars in cash for which he gave me a receipt; and I also gave him a check for nineteen thousand."

"But why did you do it when you suspected that it was crooked? Twenty thousand dollars is a lot of money."

"I only lost one thousand dollars on the deal," Roy informed her. "I stopped payment on the check."

"But I don't see how that disposes of Howard," Maxine said with a helpless gesture.

"I'll explain that in a moment. You see, I felt that you were obeying him because of some sort of hold he had on you. I knew he wasn't the type of man you would choose for a friend. So I thought that if I got a hold on him, I'd be able to free you. I looked up a friend of mine, a New Yorker whom I had met in Chicago. He's a lawyer and we talked it over. I spent the night in his home.

"I got in touch with Howard and insisted that he mail the stock to me. He didn't like that. He wanted to give it to me personally. But he was afraid to object too strenuously for fear that I'd become suspicious. Twenty thousand dollars looked big to him. So he took a chance and mailed it.

"Now I've got him. If I care to, I can prosecute him on Federal charges —using the mails to defraud. So you see he can't do a thing to your brother now unless he wants to go to prison himself. I don't think we'll ever hear from Howard again. In fact, he may have left town already. The moment the bank refused to cash my check, he probably sensed trouble and got out while he could."

Maxine looked up at him with adoring eyes.

"So you always loved me," she said as he swept her into his arms, "and you always believed in me? Oh, dearest, I never thought I'd ever be as happy as this."

Then she went to him, surrendering happily to his great, infolding love.

## MEMORY

I GATHERED roses then, and wove
Them, glowing darkly, in your hair;
Red blooms, a very treasure-trove
Of loveliness, yet not so fair
As the misty beauty of your eyes—
Clean beauty of the rain-washed skies—
Deep pools of purity and love,
Bright-sparkling as the sun-drenched air.

A. Leslie.

# Love's Precious Lie

## By Violet Gordon

THE Knave of Hearts put his arm around the Pansy Queen and waltzed her to the open balcony of the Magnolia Dance Club.

"Come out here and tell me what's wrong, darling?" said the knave. "There's been something for weeks. And I'm going to know——"

"Please, Ken, there isn't a thing. Don't spoil this dance, honey. Let's just have fun."

"All right. But first tell me what's wrong."

The Pansy Queen's heart turned over. How could she tell Ken she had decided not to marry him? How could she

watch that burning happy look go out, leaving ashes in Ken's beautiful dark eyes? She couldn't—not on this gala night of Mardi Gras. There was time enough when the season of mourning set in.

Ken turned her face up to his, so that a Moorish lantern shone full upon it. He raised her mask and looked deep into her eyes. His voice was grave—searching.

"Don't you love me any more, Josette?"

Love him? No, love was too mild a term. She worshiped him—always had, since that day long ago when she had gone with her mother to Charleston to sew fasteners on Ken's sister's trousseau, and Ken had been so sweet, coaxing her away from the hot sewing room to see his shop, the despair of that correct household because of its fantastic electric contrivances.

Soon afterward Ken's first shy liking had blossomed into love, and his roadster had made frequent trips to Magnolia; while Jo's love grew from selfish young fondness to something so big it frightened her.

"Ken," she whispered, trembling, "I do love you, but perhaps—not just the way I thought I did at first. I didn't want to talk about it to-night, but you're forcing me to."

To say such a thing to Ken—her beloved! His voice, when he spoke, had changed a little.

"Is there some one else, Jo?"

The Pansy Queen was scornful. Her blue and purple scarves fluttered impatiently; her head of pansy-center-gold, framed in purple and blue petals, shook itself. As if a girl could love any one else when Ken—big, gorgeous, handsome Ken—was there for a choice!

"Of course there's no one else. It's just that I'm not sure of myself, and I thought——"

Ken interrupted with a faint laugh. "I believe you're spoofing, Jo. Is it because of what mother wrote Mrs. Carr?"

It was exactly that. Mrs. Scott had said Ken's father, one of the wealthiest bankers in Charleston, would disinherit Ken if he married the little dressmaker's daughter, but that if Josette would give him up Mr. Scott would settle an annuity on Mrs. Carr and pay for the necessary eye operation to restore her sight.

This had meant the end of everything to Jo, for she was far too proud to marry Ken if his family thought her beneath them, and her mother—whose recent blindness might be cured by a six months' treatment, including an operation, in a New York eye hospital—was to proud to accept help from people who looked down on her adorable little Jo.

"It's not—exactly that," falter Jo. "It's just——"

"Just rubbish," Ken finished for her. "But if it's because of my family—they don't matter any more, dear. I've left home for good."

"You've left home? But why didn't you tell me before, Ken?"

"I'm telling you now. It just happened this afternoon. I have a job."

"What in the world——"

"Don't look so skeptical, darling. It isn't flattering. Behold the new machinist and electrician over at Cypress Green!"

"Cypress Green! But, sweetheart, there are only the natives on the island. Who engaged you?"

"Warner Meadows himself. He got back from Europe yesterday. I heard he wanted a machinist-electrician. So I applied and got the job because of my —er—great personality."

"Well, of all the conceit! Did you tell him who you were?"

"No, honey, I didn't. Meadows wouldn't take me on if dad asked him not to. There must be a few dozen Scotts in the State of South Carolina,

so I reckon he thinks I'm just one of those. He hasn't seen me since I was a kid."

"But can you do the work, darling?"

"Sure I can. Have you forgotten my shop? And after all, I did learn something at college. What I don't know I'll bluff, dear. I'm to have my own cottage on Cypress—big enough for a wife if I can get a girl to take me up."

Her eyes shone at him delightedly, proudly. Then the light died out. What was she doing to Ken? Taking him out of his proper sphere, putting him in the class that earns its bread by drudgery. She slipped her arms around his neck and drew his head down to hers.

"Darling—darling! My sweet ole honey!"

The tears were thick on her lashes, but he was so eager sharing his plans with her that he didn't notice. Her heart broke over him—so happy at giving up everything most men would think worth living for—so dear and loving! All for her!

His lips on hers, behind the magnolia tubs, she lost herself in a lovely dream of might-have-beens. A cottage with Ken, little meals for two, working for a bigger future, with Ken all to herself. She returned kiss for kiss in a passion of tenderness, till they were obliged to join the other dancers.

Paper flowers and real flowers, dogwood from the hills, wild narcissus, early jasmine, mingling with streamers and confetti; vivid costumes none the less effective because they were cheap; pretty girls, self-conscious young men, masks, all evident of the gayness of the Mardi Gras. Suddenly Jo noticed a change, a flutter of excited interest that seemed to center in the crowd around the punch bowl.

"I wonder what it is, dear?"

Ken was so tall he could easily see. "It's Warner Meadows himself. He must have decided to give the village girls a treat. He's got a mask on the size of a butterfly. It doesn't hide much more than the bridge of his nose."

There was a burst of laughter from the crowd around the punch bowl. The music started, and Jo saw Warner, tall, florid, expensive-looking, on the young side of middle age, dance off with a pretty little brunette of about twenty-seven.

"That's Dolly Hayes," she told Ken. "I'd know her in any disguise. She used to be a great friend of Mrs. Meadows's. She was with her when Mrs. Meadows was killed. Remember?"

Ken knew, every one knew, about Warner's short and tragic marriage to lovely Verna Varden, youngest of the Varden dancing sisters. On Cypress Green, his island plantation, he had surrounded her with luxuries and house guests jealously chosen from the older and least dangerous of his friends. But Verna had grown thin and pale. She had developed a cough and had been, for months at a stretch, a semi-invalid. During these times she had refused to see any one but her sister Vallée, or Dolly Hayes, the village girl who was more congenial than her husband's aristocratic connections.

With Dolly and Vallée she had gone at last to Merivale, Florida, for a brief holiday; and while she was in Merivale, a cyclone had struck the little town, completely demolishing it. Magnolia had seen Warner Meadows leave for the scene of the horror, and return with his wife's body for burial in the Cypress Green vault.

Dolly had come back with him, looking white and terrified, but Vallée had been too badly injured to accompany them. Then for a year Warner had disappeared—traveling somewhere in Europe to forget his troubles. And now, as though nothing had happened, he was back at the Mardi Gras dancing with pretty Dolly Hayes, lovely in her gypsy costume.

"Life's funny," sighed Jo. "I don't

see how he could forget as quickly as that."

Ken took a man's viewpoint. "Poor cuss. Let him forget it if he can. It's over a year now."

As the whirl of the dance drew the two couples nearer, Jo saw Dolly's eyes shining up into Warner's. How glad she seemed to see him! Almost as if—only, of course that was absurd. It was Verna, not Warner, that Dolly had loved.

Suddenly there was a pause—a burst of exclamations—laughs—giggles. The lights had all gone out. Jo felt the crowds of dancers pressing against her, tearing her away from Ken. She reached out frightened hands.

"Hold me tight, honey. Don't let me go," she pleaded.

"Not a chance—you're safe here, little one!"

She cuddled close in that warm shelter. "Honey, don't kiss me. The lights'll go on and they'll catch us!"

But she gave in. Why not?—when soon she was to lose Ken's lips and adoring protecting arms! She was breathless in the close ardor of that kiss. And just as suddenly—the lights went on again!

For a second each laughing couple was more or less engrossed with one another. Jo stared petrified into the face above hers. The butterfly mask was gone, and Warner's amused eyes returned her gaze.

"Only I'm not as surprised as you are," he gibed. "You see, I'd noticed that pansy thing on your head. As soon as I touched it I knew who you were."

"Then—how dared you kiss me!"

"Now don't be cross. How could I help myself with such temptation?"

"But—where's Ken?" stammered Jo almost in tears.

"Ken? Now, I ask you, is that nice? Should you call on Ken when I've just protected you from the trampling throngs? Allow me, please."

He removed her mask with a hand accustomed to do as it willed, his head bent to hers from massive shoulders.

"Pansy eyes, purple blue! Was that why you chose the delirious little costume? Saucy scrap of a nose, cherry-red mouth like some one's dream of a kiss—Ken's, alas! Chin—gosh, little one, why such a strong young chin? Hair, a twist of sunbeams."

Jo had recovered her wits. When Ken was masterful she worshiped it. But this man was not Ken. There was a coarseness in his touch that she resented. She gave a quick gasp as Ken at that moment found her.

"Jo, I've been looking everywhere. How did I lose you?"

Claiming her, he never even saw Warner, whom Dolly had found simultaneously, and dragged away. But Jo saw the big man's contemptuous measuring regard of her sweetheart, and trembling with anger, she clung to Ken.

"Why, darling, your heart's beating like a frightened bird's!"

"It's nothing." She nestled even closer.

The masks were all coming off. The fun was at its height. Suddenly a hand fell on Ken's shoulder.

"So the knave's young Scott—of all people! May I cut in?"

Ken, surprised, reluctantly gave way to his boss. Once more Jo was in Warner's arms, his quizzical, amused eyes caressing her.

"I want to apologize," he said. "I shouldn't have taken advantage that time. I suppose my new electrician is Ken! And it was he you thought you were kissing."

Josette was drowned in confusion, but she held her head up. "Yes, I thought it was Ken. You see I'm engaged to him. It's all right for him to kiss me."

"Yes, in that case it's absolutely correct form. So you're engaged to Ken! Well, when I meet a girl as lovely as you and she tells me right off the bat that

***"Ken darling, it's Jo—your own Jo." Her tears had dried. She was strong and sure of herself.***

she's engaged, I call it bad news. Can't you pretend you're still fancy free for just to-night? I assure you it won't do Ken any harm, and if you insist, I'll promise not to take advantage again. No matter how often the lights go out, you sweet tempting little thing!"

Much against her will Jo was presently dragged into a party of four—she and the great Warner Meadows, Ken and Dolly Hayes. A party of which only one member was happy and having a good time—Warner.

"Why do you suppose he did it?" Ken fumed on the way home. "You must have laid him flat with a look, Jo."

"I didn't mean to," she defended herself, wondering if she should tell about the kiss in the dark.

"Of course you didn't, you precious darling. It's just that some girls are born that way and I have the uncom-

fortable honor of being engaged to one of them."

He recovered his good humor in teasing her. But Jo sensed the hurt, the fear, under his words.

"Darling, darling Ken," she whispered to her heart, "if I could just pretend to like Mr. Meadows better than you, if I could just make myself look like a horrid little gold-digger, you'd be cured. You'd get all over loving me."

But in spite of this noble thought her last kiss on Ken's ardent young mouth dispelled all his doubts, if he ever had any.

To some men the lure of a hard chase becomes an obsession, and Warner Meadows was one of these. Almost any girl in his own social circle would have flown to his arms and his millions if he had held out a finger. Yet here was a beggar maid, so to speak, with eyes like pansies and hair like ripe young wheat, who seemed almost to dislike him, who vastly preferred that husky young electrician to whom he paid such a small salary.

Warner was presently in full chase.

Jo worked in an office in Magnolia. At five o'clock when she got out expecting to meet Ken at the corner, she began to notice that Ken was always kept busy at Cypress Green, across the strait from Magnolia, on some work specified by the owner, while Warner would frequently overtake her and ask to drive her home in his car.

This placed Jo in an awkward position. She didn't want to offend Ken's boss, and yet she resented his attentions.

"Look here, what's so much more fascinating about that fellow than about me?" Warner demanded one day. "I'm as big as he is and as good looking, aren't I?"

She took this lightly. "You're both simply paralyzing."

"Humph! And that's not just what I want either. Are you going to ask me in to-day, cuteness? I bet your mother'll like me, even if you don't."

Unwillingly Jo asked him into the little bungalow home she just managed to keep going—with its box-bordered paths, its pink-plumed tamarisks, and tiny rose garden struggling to bloom. And that was the beginning of the end. Jo's mother, hurt beyond expression by the way the Scotts had treated her baby, was at first astonished, then tremulously delighted at this much bigger conquest of Jo's.

The second time Warner came Mrs. Carr asked him to stay to dinner, which Jo cooked with tears in her eyes and throat, knowing that the nets were slowly closing in. Warner made himself charming, helping with the table, running out for ice cream—as if he weren't one of the biggest and most important men in the State.

"Jo," he told her afterward, when he was actually drying dishes, "I don't know what you've done to me. I can't think of a thing but you now. Wherever I am, that dear little pansy face comes up between me and other women."

"But Mr. Meadows——"

"Don't call me that," he broke in. "Call me Warner, or else I'll think you find me too old to live."

Then Mrs. Carr, poor blind, unhappy woman, got a frantic letter from Ken's mother.

Ken has left home and we haven't any idea where he is. His father is furious and says he will never speak to him again unless he comes home and behaves himself. It's your daughter, Lily, who has made this trouble in our happy family. Tell her to give Ken up, or she will have to pay the price of ruining my boy's life.

"Darling, please give him up," Lily Carr begged. "Nothing but misfortune can come to us this way. Why won't you marry Mr. Meadows? He's not ashamed of you or of me!"

"Why, mother, how could I when I

love Ken so much?" Jo's voice broke. She bit her trembling lip.

"If you really loved him," her mother shot at her, "you'd pretend you didn't care any more. You'd marry Warner Meadows and Ken would soon get over his infatuation for you."

This was no new thought to Josette. She burst into tears and promised that if Warner ever proposed she would accept him, for Ken's sake and for her mother's.

Warner gave her her opportunity the very next day at noon. When she came out of her office he was waiting to take her to lunch. In a small booth at the Magnolia Kettledrum he leaned across the table and said:

"You've got me now that I can't sleep, beautiful." And indeed he did look haggard. "I want you more than anything in this world. I'll be good to you. I'll be good to your mother. I'm asking you to marry me, Jo. Will you?"

For a minute the eyes looking into his were the most tragic he had ever seen. Then Jo smiled.

"I don't love you, Warner. I love Ken Scott. Would you be willing to take me that way?"

He made a rueful face. "If that's the only way I can get you."

"Very well then, I'll marry you. For Ken's sake," she added under her breath.

"And pretty soon," said Warner, "I prophesy that you will wonder how you ever preferred any one to me." He got up, drew the curtains of the booth a little, and kissed Jo lingeringly on the lips.

It nearly killed her but she made no protest. That night when Ken came to take her out, she would have to break the news to him. She told Warner this, so that he would give her her last night with the man she loved, alone. Then she went home—to tell her mother the news of her new engagement.

Ken came a little after eight—in a strange hurried way. He stood with his back against the door and questioned Jo with narrowed dark eyes.

"Is it true, honey?" Then when she didn't answer: "Say it isn't, Jo. Say it's a lie!"

She knew that in some way he had already heard.

"Oh, Ken, who told you?" Her cold fingers crept about her throat.

"Then it is true!"

Jo wept. She hunted for a handkerchief. Ken was across the room in three strides, one arm about her, the other hand wiping her tears with a big square of linen.

"Darling, of course it isn't true. It's just all lies—bad lies. You're my girl, aren't you, Jo—my very own girl? That was fool talk Dolly Hayes gave me."

"Dolly! What did she say?"

"Why, she came all the way across to Cypress, blew into my cabin and said you were engaged to Warner Meadows, he had told her so. She said: 'For Heaven's sake, stop it. It mustn't take place. Jo doesn't know what she's getting into. You love her, Ken. Keep her out of this. I've been called suddenly to Savannah, so I can't do a thing. But you must, Ken.' Only I didn't really believe her, darling."

Jo remembered the look in Dolly's eyes when she had danced with Warner at the Mardi Gras. Dolly loved Warner. Every one seemed to be getting hurt. Of course there was nothing she could do to make Warner love poor Dolly. So Jo pulled herself together and made the speech that would kill her beloved Ken's love for her, the speech that would send him back to his family, cured for all time.

"Ken's, it's true. I'm going to marry Warner. I might as well tell the reason, dear. Warner's money means more to me than anything in the world."

When Ken had gone, taking that dreadful shattered look away with him, Jo sat staring straight ahead of her, too stunned to cry, too broken to think of a

future without love. She had done the right thing, so she believed, and now she wanted to die.

Afterward she never quite understood how things moved so quickly. Warner, whose yacht, the *Lotus,* had just come out of dry dock, gave excellent reasons why they should be married at once. And Jo's mother upheld him.

Warner engaged a traveling companion for Mrs. Carr, to take the little blind lady to the eye hospital just before he and Jo should leave on the *Lotus* for their honeymoon. The operation would not take place for some months, by which time Jo would be able to stay with her mother.

Buying clothes, getting her mother ready for the trip to New York, Jo was so busy that she had little time to think of Ken.

"Have you heard from him, dear?" Lily Carr asked uneasily the morning of the wedding.

"No," Jo replied in a small stifled voice. "He said he didn't want to know the day I was married."

"Then he's still working at Cypress Green?"

"Only till to-morrow. He gave notice at once. Please, mummy, don't ask me to talk about him."

"Jo—darling." For an instant Lily Carr stretched out helpless hands, ready to give in, ready to do anything to bring the joy back to Jo's frozen young heart. But then she remembered the letter from Ken's mother, and the hands dropped to her sides.

At two o'clock that day Jo became Mrs. Warner Meadows.

They were married in the little house where she had been born and raised, Jo in a brown-and-sand traveling suit of her own making.

"You're mine now," whispered Warner when he kissed her. "All mine, Mrs. Meadows."

Her small hands clenched, Jo turned to kiss her mother.

"Oh, I know it's for the best. I know it must be!" came Mrs. Carr's low moan. "Such a splendid match, Jo dear!"

Suddenly the news seemed to get around. The telephone began to ring and all Jo's girl friends wanted to talk to her.

"Jo honey, have you really married Mr. Meadows? Why, you-all are such swells now you'll never look at us again!"

"Jo, can't we see you? Weren't you mean to keep it such a secret?"

Jo and Warner saw Mrs. Carr and the traveling companion off for New York, and then Warner's chauffeur drove them to the pier where the *Lotus* was anchored.

"Just wait here a minute, darling," said Warner, "while I get my new captain's papers looked over. I'll be back in five minutes. The yacht's dinghy is waiting."

He had hardly left her—standing there by the window, fighting the sobs that rose in her throat, when the door opened and Dolly Hayes rushed in.

"Dolly!" Jo was surprised, sorry that Dolly should be made to suffer. "I thought you were in Savannah?"

"So I was, but I came back to get Warner!" Dolly caught her excitedly by the shoulders. "I had a letter from Ken Scott. He said you were marrying Warner to-day!"

"Ken!" came faintly from Jo. "So he knew!"

"Yes, I got his letter this morning and came at once. I telegraphed Warner I was coming. Have you married him, Jo?"

There was desperate pleading in her pretty eyes. Jo touched her hand gently. "Yes. I'm sorry, Dolly."

"They told me you were already married, so I called Ken at Cypress Green, and, Jo, they say he's dying. You'll have to go to him at once. You'll have to hurry."

***It was a dark night. A fog hid the moon. Jo watched her opportunity and slipped across to the pier.***

Jo couldn't take it in at first. This was too fantastic. Ken—dying! Dolly, acting this way!

"What do you mean, Dolly Hayes? Tell me at once!"

"It's true. It's the honest truth, Jo. He was mending Warner's aërial. Ken's mad about you. Maybe he just didn't care what happened."

"Tell me." It was Jo who clutched Dolly now, shook her a little. "Tell me at once!"

"He fell, there was a rotten board, and he's frightfully hurt."

"Dying, you say?"

"Yes. They're getting a doctor over. He's at his cottage. They say he can't live."

Jo listened for no more. All at once nothing in the world mattered except her Ken, her dear one. She fled from Dolly, from the station, from her husband and the *Lotus*. She got a taxi and drove to Warner's private ferry running between Magnolia and the island.

Luckily the boat was on the mainland waiting for the doctor, whose taxi pulled up simultaneously with Jo's. Jo knew him by sight, Doctor Green, but on the trip across she couldn't speak to him. She knew that if she did she would break down.

On Cypress Green, that wild and lovely plantation of cotton and rice, she hurried down the long dock above the marsh grass and flooded rice fields, to an avenue of moss-hung live oaks. Here the doctor was met by a house servant with a car. Other servants had come to the ferry. One old man spoke to Josette.

"Who you wan', ma'am? You a frien' of young Boss Scott?"

Choking on her reply, tears streaming down her face, she begged him to take her to Ken, and he obligingly led her after the car at a jog trot. This was the home-coming of Warner Meadow's bride.

Past crab-apple thickets and white haws, cherokee roses just breaking into starry spring bloom, and slender trees tangled with budding jasmine, Josette hurried to the cottage that might have been her home—hers and Ken's. Here she met the doctor coming out, a worried look in his eyes.

"Please," Josette accosted him, her small face drawn with grief, "is he still living?"

The doctor was kind. He touched her arm pityingly.

"Aren't you little Jo Carr? I saw you on the ferry, didn't I? Do you know this young man?"

"Yes, I love him, Doctor Green." She had forgotten she was Warner's wife.

"Poor girl. We must get in touch with his people at once. He won't live more than an hour or two."

Josette stifled a cry. She gave the address of Ken's family.

"Look here, you don't mean the big Charleston banker?"

"Yes, that's Ken's father."

Doctor Green, overcome by the importance of his patient, hurried off to the big house to telephone, and Josette crept in to Ken.

He was lying on the narrow bed, unconscious, white, still, tragically young-looking. A big Negress was talking to him in a soft sing-song voice.

"Don' you fret, honey. Ain't so bad once you git across the ribah. Don' you take it so hard, li'l' buckra. We-alls got to go some time."

A sudden quick strength came to Josette. She motioned the woman away, knelt beside Ken, and took his head gently in her arms.

"Ken darling, it's Jo—your own Jo. Look up, dear love!" Her tears had dried. She was strong and sure of herself. She knew what she was going to do. Nothing mattered now but to make Ken happy in this trip across the "ribah." Still, it surprised her when he opened his beautiful eyes and stared at her through a sort of misty veil.

"Jo!" It was just a whisper.

"Yes, Jo, who loves you better than life, dear. Don't you know that, Ken?"

"But you were married to——"

"To no one, dearest," she interrupted. "Who's been talking foolishness? I knew I could never marry any one but my own Ken. I came to tell you so, dear, and they said you'd been—a little hurt, but that you'd soon be well again."

An incredulous joy fluttered through the mists of pain in Ken's eyes. "You —you aren't married?"

"Not yet, sweetheart. I'm waiting for you. Just as soon as you're strong enough."

She could feel the swift glory coming

up from his heart like a flame. His hand groped. She caught it in hers, held it to her cheek, kissed it. Her eyes swam like stars above him. He said:

"You mean—you're still—my——"

"Still your girl, dear, always Ken's girl. Forever."

He was exhausted, past speaking. But his lips pleaded. With a touch of pure love, warm and true and gentle, so as not to smother the feeble breath, she pressed her lips to Ken's. And Ken drifted back into the shadows of the borderland.

Dusk fell. The Negress, tiptoeing, lighted a lamp and covered it with a red cloth. Doctor Green came in once or twice and touched Ken's wrist, but no one disturbed him. They let him sleep, faintly breathing, held close against Jo's childish heart.

Jo could hear in the distance the wash of water across brown dikes, the call of the ganets and marsh hens. Then a ghostlier, lonelier cry, the long-drawn howl of a dog pointing at a newly risen moon. The call of death.

She could see the fear in the whites of the Negress's eyes. Jealously, passionately, she clung to her dear one, sleeping away his life in her arms. Then there was a whisper at the door—the woman expostulating. Presently to Jo:

"Dey's holding a doctah's consolation, ma'am. Leave yoh sweetheart jes' a minute. Ah'll be watchin'."

With all the skill and tenderness in her power, Jo settled a pillow where her arm had been. At the door she saw two men. One of them led her outside.

"A consultation," she heard him saying. "You poor girl—is he an old friend? Back broken, I understand."

Jo, released for a moment from her post of duty, felt very queer. She wondered if she were going to faint and lifted up her head to draw in the cool fresh air. Instead, something seemed to cut it off, something soft and woolly that settled about her face. Without a sound, without a struggle, Jo slipped into a vista of encroaching blackness.

It was a long time before she came to. Once or twice she heard voices, saying things that didn't make any sense.

"You must have hit her, you fool. You didn't do it the way I said. My gosh, man, my wife may die!"

"I give you my word, sir, I hardly touched her. She fainted."

There was the sound of an engine throbbing, of steel cutting through water. Jo presently recovered sufficiently to know she was on a boat. Bit by bit from the conversation she realized that she was on the *Lotus* with Warner. Warner had kidnaped her from Ken's bedside.

As soon as his anxiety about her was relieved, he told her in no uncertain terms what he thought of her.

"Dolly finally confessed. I got it out of her. That was a nice way to treat your husband, to make him a laughing-stock for the whole country. I wonder, my dear, why I don't hate you. If you had to come to young Scott, why didn't you let me take you?"

"You wouldn't have done it!"

"You have no proof of that, Josette."

"No." She sat up, wringing her hands. "Warner, you shouldn't have dragged me away from Ken like that. He's dying. He hasn't more than a few hours. I must know how he is."

Warner's smile was one-sided. "Perhaps I'm not as bad as you think, my dear. I know"—bitterly—"that you love this fellow, and though I won't consent to your spending my honeymoon with him, I've made arrangements to get radio bulletins of his condition every hour. Does that satisfy you?"

It had to. For hours Josette walked the floor of the beautiful luxurious saloon, while the *Lotus* steamed on, and each hour the operator brought a radio message.

"No change," said the first one.

"Scott's pulse weakening," said the second.

And then the third—shortly after the second.

Warner read it and changed color. He seemed to read it two or three times. Jo ran across to him.

"Give it to me—please—I must know!"

But he crumpled the paper in his hand. "It isn't from Cypress. It has nothing to do with the man you love."

His expression was so strange that Jo drew back. But she didn't believe him. She felt sure he was keeping some news back, and the uncertainty nearly killed her. Later she heard him talking to the captain, asking the exact location of the yacht. Then she knew they were pointing toward a harbor.

"Where are we going?"

Warner leaned down and looked into her eyes. "What's there about me, Jo, that makes you hate me?"

"I don't hate you," she told him, "except when you keep me away from Ken." She burst into tears again.

He made an impatient gesture and left her. Presently they roped the *Lotus* to the pier posts, and through the saloon windows Jo saw Warner leave the yacht. Where was he going? What was he doing? Oh, if she only knew what had been in the radiogram!

Then while she was walking up and down, distracted with her thoughts, the young operator made his fourth appearance in the saloon. He had a small, blue radio message in his hand, and he was looking for Warner, seemingly unaware that his employer had gone ashore. Jo flew to him and took the blue slip before he could draw back. She opened it and read:

Scott died at eleven forty-five.

To Jo came a sudden picture of Cypress Green, the servants collected around the door of Ken's cottage, the moss-hung oaks, the thorny yupon, the crab-tree thickets, and far on the hill the white house with its Corinthian pillars. She could see a moon sailing high and a dog howling at it.

She read the message again, and plumbed the depths of all sorrow. There were no tears now, just a despair of grief. The kindly stewardess tried to get her to go to bed, but Jo refused. She had one idea, to go back to the island, to be with Ken, to kiss him once, before they took him away. She had a feeling that he wanted her there, that he was calling.

She had no money in her purse, but around her neck in a small chamois bag was a ten-dollar gold piece given her by her mother that morning. Her grandmother had given it to Lily Carr on another wedding day. It was a dark night. A fog hid the moon; the crew slept or dozed. Jo watched her opportunity and slipped across to the pier. Then, fleeing on light feet, she ran till she was sure of her escape, ran down the docks of Savannah.

It was nearly six the next morning when, after a night of adventure that seemed unreal to her, Jo paid a young boy to row her across the strait from Magnolia to Cypress. She was like a wan little ghost in her crumpled wedding suit when she finally passed the sunken rice fields, with their border of palmetto, willow, and cypress flanking the hill below Ken's cottage.

It was all very quiet. A red cardinal splashed in the bird bath; from across the thicket came the song of the kildee; from still nearer came the chant of men early at work. Jo climbed the hill between box hedge and whitewashed stones to Ken's door. She knocked upon it.

There was no answer for a minute. Had they moved him already? Was her trip all for nothing? Then the door opened, and a man stared at her. It was Ken's father.

"Josette!" he cried. "Josette Carr, thank Heaven you've come!"

Ken's mother came running. She flung her arms about Jo and wept.

"I prayed and prayed that something would bring you. Come, child!"

Then a great wonder, a joy so staggering it seemed too much to bear, flooded through Jo. She heard Ken's voice—Ken calling to her in delirium.

"Jo—Jo darling—where are you?"

"Is he alive?"

"Yes, yes, dear. All night he has called you!"

"And I heard him," said Jo strangely.

He lay with flushed cheeks and bright eyes. Jo, trembling, took the beloved head in her arms and crooned over him.

"Ken darling, here's Jo, right beside you. I'll never leave you again."

He gave a great sigh of content. Though he did not exactly regain consciousness, he seemed to know she was there. Happily he relaxed against her.

They slipped cushions about her to support her. They did all they could to ease the cramp of her muscles—Ken's mother smiling at her through tears, the doctor from Charleston anxiously watching. But it wasn't till two hours later that Ken dropped into a really quiet sleep. Then they made Jo leave him for a little while, fussing over her, giving her hot coffee.

"Will he live?" she asked breathlessly.

"There's a chance now you've come," said the doctor.

"But his back? Is it——"

"I think the Magnolia man was wrong. I can't find that it's broken."

"He's living for you, dear. Just for you," said Ken's mother. "How can dad and I ever earn your forgiveness? This accident of Ken's has opened our eyes to how selfish, how foolish we were. Hasn't it, dad?"

It was hard for a man as proud as Mr. Scott to humble himself, but he did.

"From the bottom of my heart I apologize to you, and to your mother, Josette," said Ken's father. "I was a stiff-necked fool. If Ken gets well"—how delicately he touched on that terrible little "if"!—"I shall be honored if you will forgive me and consent to be my daughter."

The tears came to Jo's eyes, blinding her. "But it's too late," she told them in a whisper. "I am married to Warner Meadows."

She shrank from the shock in their faces.

"The man who owns this plantation?"

"Yes. I married him yesterday. I did it to free Ken. I didn't want to ruin his life, and I knew he wouldn't give me up as long as it was possible to have me."

She hated to see their stricken eyes.

"But," said Ken's mother, "what will my boy do when he learns this?"

"I think he did hear it," said Jo wretchedly. "But I told him it wasn't true yesterday, when he was hurt. I told him I was still free. You see they said he had only an hour to live."

"And that must have been what saved him!" Mr. Scott turned his back and stared out of the window.

It seemed strange to see their resentment, almost their anger, that she should marry another man, when they had driven her to it.

"Where is your husband?" asked Mrs. Scott presently. "Doctor Green said you left suddenly yesterday, between two of his visits."

"Warner sent for me," said Jo, not quite willing to tell everything. Then a thought struck her. "But the radiogram! Some one broadcast from Cypress that Ken was—that Ken had——"

She pulled the crumpled slip of blue from her dress and gave it to Mr. Scott. He called the doctor in and they both examined it.

"I don't know who could have done this," said the doctor. "It looks like a fake."

All at once Jo knew. Sure that Ken would die as Doctor Green had said, Warner had faked all those messages from Cypress, hoping that Jo would give up hope and resign herself. Jo took the blue paper and read it again, eyes hard with anger. The operator had been told to bring these to Warner every hour; this last one he had brought without knowing that his master had left the ship.

Jo noticed pressure lines across the surface of the paper, a mark made by the penciling of a former message on the pad. She looked closer and read:

Magnolia, 11 p. m.

Make port at Savannah and go to Vallée stop she is at the Savannah Arms stop no time to lose stop I am leaving now

DOLLY.

So this was what had taken him to Savannah last night! Vallée, the elder

***It was nearly six the next morning when, after a night of adventure, Jo paid a young boy to row her across the strait from Magnolia to Cypress.***

of the famous Varden sisters, Warner's sister-in-law.

But Jo was too tired, too overwrought to waste another thought on Warner. She was glad that her little mother had gone away, that she had peacefully escaped all this sorrow.

For two days she hardly left Ken's side, loving him, reassuring him every time he regained a moment's consciousness that she would never leave him again, nursing him back to health and life on the tender but false promise that she was his, that she would be his for the rest of their lives.

Sometimes she would meet his mother's or his father's eyes and quail before the fear in them. What would happen when Ken found out? What would happen when he knew that she was Warner's bride?

Meanwhile the big house on the hill stayed empty. Warner had not returned. The housekeeper offered hospitality to Ken's family till Ken could be moved, but none of them would accept it.

Suddenly Ken threw off the fever and came permanently out of his delirium. He reached up weak hands, took Josette's in his, and drew them down to his lips.

"Darling, darling Jo, such dreams I've had! Such dreadful dreams, all mixed up with happy ones!"

She kissed him, again and again, as if she were starving and his kisses were food to her.

"Tell me your dreams, dear."

"I thought you left me. I thought some one told me Warner Meadows had taken you away. Gosh, Jo, I nearly lost my mind."

"Did you, darling? But here I am!"

"Don't I know it! Right here, sweetheart, you and mother and dad. All friends again. You'll never leave me, will you, Jo?"

She couldn't answer. All she could do was kiss him and try not to think of the future. Some time soon, she supposed, she would have to leave him. Warner would come for her. But meantime she must save Ken; save his precious body even at the price of later destroying his happiness. She knew that he was getting well simply because of his glad new hopes.

"It was queer about that fall," he told her. "I didn't do it on purpose, Jo. There really was a rotten board, but when I was falling I thought it meant death, and I was glad. I didn't want to live without you, dear."

This was the sort of thing that tortured her. She presently learned that somewhere in his heart lingered a doubt of his happiness. On a day when she was arranging crocuses and early narcissus in a bowl, he woke from a strengthening sleep and called to her.

"Jo, sweet, come here."

She went to him, knelt beside him and held his head against her shoulder.

"Jo, you'll think I'm crazy, but I can't help feeling that there's still something wrong. That—that fellow may have some claim on you."

"But why do you think that, dear?" she asked with a sinking heart.

"I told you—I guess I'm cuckoo, but I can't help it, honey. I'm just that way."

"Ken, you mustn't think these things. You must just get well and strong."

"I know, and I will, dear. But there's one thing I'm going to ask you to do for me."

"What it is, darling?"

"First I want to make sure I'll be able to walk, that I'll be quite fit again. Will I?"

"Of course you will, Ken. The doctors all say there isn't a shadow of a doubt. Positively."

"Good. Then, sweetheart, will you make me the happiest man alive?"

Her heart shrank in terror. She had a premonition of what he was going to say. "What is it, Ken dear?"

"It's just this: I'll lose all these doubts, these nightmares, when you are really mine, honey. When I can take your hand while I lie here and see my ring on it."

"But you can see it, dear, here's your ring!"

Hidden in the other room was Warner's band of platinum and great shining solitaire. On Jo's third finger was the emerald set in diamond chips that Ken had given her.

"That? Oh, yes, our engagement ring. But it isn't what I mean, honey. I want to see another ring there." He drew her down close till his lips touched her cheek. "I want to see my wedding ring on your hand. Then I'll know it isn't a beautiful myth. I'll know it's true, that you're really my girl forever."

How his dark eyes shone at her, his eyes that had always held such a terrible beauty for Jo!

"You want me to——"

"Yes, love, I want you to marry me—here—to-day!"

"But Ken, wouldn't you rather wait till later?"

"No, I can't wait. I hate to wait." A shadow fell on his face, a hurt look. "Unless you feel you don't want to marry a fellow on his back this way."

Quickly, lovingly Jo reassured him, smothering him in endearments till the sun shone in those eyes again.

Then she told his father and mother.

There was consternation in three hearts. And even greater consternation after Ken's father had had a talk with him.

"I couldn't handle it," said Mr. Scott brushing his handkerchief across his forehead. "I'm beginning to think you shouldn't have done this, Jo. It's worse than the other way."

"No, no!" Ken's mother cried. "Don't say that, daddy."

But Ken thought it was arranged about the license and minister and everything. He had Hattie, the big colored nurse, and two of the boys go out hunting flowers, filling his room with them. "To make it look like a real spring wedding, dear."

"Oh," prayed Jo, "let something happen, dear Heaven, let something happen, quick!"

Ken's father said he would go to Magnolia and come back with a story of not being able to get a license till Ken could go for it himself. Jo sat beside her sweetheart, till she thought she heard Mr. Scott returning. Then she ran to the door, flung it open, and gave a little cry.

Warner stood outside.

"Oh—oh—you!"

"It's pleasant to see you so thrilled!" said Warner dryly. "Don't worry. I won't come in, but I'd like you to come up to the house just for a minute. You've never been there, I understand. Dolly has something to tell you."

Jo was frightened, reluctant.

"That's all right," said Warner. "No more kidnapings. You'll be glad you came." His voice was harsh, but Jo had a sudden sense of safety.

She told Ken's mother where she was going.

"You're sure it's all right, dear?" Mrs. Scott asked. "If you don't come back in half an hour or telephone, I'll go after you."

But Jo knew, somehow, that Warner would not harm her. He looked tired, older. He drove her the short distance to the big house, and took her into the fine old library. Dolly rose from a chair.

"I'll leave you now," said Warner. "You tell her, Doll." He closed the door.

Dolly caught her hands. "Jo, do you love him?" Then: "I know you don't—and I almost hate you for that!"

Jo nodded. "You do love him, Dolly. I guessed it long ago. I wish we could change places."

"We can't," said Dolly, "because it's you he loves. But he wasn't free when he married you, Jo. You aren't really his wife at all."

Jo would have fallen if Dolly hadn't caught her and helped her into a chair.

"Do you mean he cheated?"

Dolly shook her head.

"No, he was as ignorant of the fact as you were. I told him at the pier the day he was married to you. You see I had promised Verna to keep her secret. But Verna is dead now—she died last night."

"Verna was killed in the Florida storm!"

"No, Vallée was killed. Verna took her place. They looked alike, and when Warner came for the body that time, Verna was muffled in bandages, so that he never guessed. He buried Vallée in the vault here, and Verna as Vallée, inherited all the jewels which poor generous Warner had given her, and which she had willed to Vallée. You see she wanted to be free. Like you, she never loved Warner."

Jo could hardly believe it. Had the dog, then, bayed the death of a former mistress of Cypress—or was that just superstition? Dolly went on:

"She had lung trouble—Verna. She had it when she was living with Warner. She lived in Savannah as Vallée till last night, when she died. Warner wouldn't believe me when I told him she was living—that he had no right to marry you. Then I heard he had gone south on the *Lotus,* so I sent a wireless urging him to stop at Savannah. I went, too, and we were both with Verna when she died last night."

"Then," tremulously from Jo, "I'm not married to him?"

"You're free as the air, unless you want him."

Jo reached up and kissed Dolly. "I think we will both be happy, you and I," she said. "I'm going now. Don't come with me, Dolly."

On the wide veranda she found Warner. Gently she touched his arm.

"My dear, may I say something honest to you?"

He looked at her with a queer little smile. "Go ahead."

"All your troubles," she told him, "have come because you wanted only the girls who didn't love you. Lots of men are like that, I imagine. The next time, Warner, marry a girl who loves you!"

"Is there such a person?"

She disregarded the sarcasm. "I think so."

Their glances held, and she saw by his expression, by the sudden flicker of his eyes toward the library window, that he knew what she meant.

"Good-by, Warner, and God bless you!" said Jo. "I'll send you your rings."

She kissed him lightly on the cheek and ran away, not waiting for him to drive her. On her way home she picked great armfuls of starry white dogwood. Ken's father, dejected, drooping, came up the path as she reached the cottage.

"Hurry," said Jo joyously, "hurry back to town, Mr. Scott, and see if they won't give you that license without Ken being present. There's to be a wedding to-day."

She told him all that had happened, and the older man, when he could take it in, turned and raced back to the ferry.

Jo, her face a lovely white and purple pansy above the shower of dogwood, ran in to Ken.

"Darling, darling," she cried, "here I am! Here comes the bride!"

+ + +

# New Courage

## By Winifred Carter

EVERY day Rebecca went demurely home from the office, spent the night reading a novel, doing a cross-word puzzle, or sewing. She had no boy friends, and the girls at the office had ceased to ask her out.

"She's so shy! She sits in a corner and mopes and makes you feel rotten!" Eve Dawson, the best-looking and best-dressed girl in the office once said. "She's a wet blanket."

But not knowing of their talk about her, Rebecca did not worry about the fact that she was not popular. She wasn't at all bad-looking. She had long brown hair which she parted in the center and coiled around her head. She had a lovely complexion and never used any make-up except just a touch of powder on her nose now and then.

It was Maurice Bentley who roused Rebecca to the fact that she was shut out of everything. She was putting on her hat one day in the outside office, when she heard Maurice talking to Eve.

"We want another girl to make up our party for Saturday. Know of any one, Eve?"

Just for a moment a little quiver went through Rebecca. She wondered if Eve would think of her.

"All the girls are dated for Saturday."

And then Maurice spoke again.

"What about that girl in the accounting department? The fair-headed kid."

"You mean Rebecca Dainton? Oh, she's too shy. She's a lemon!"

The color flamed into Rebecca's cheeks, and the tears started to her eyes. She had no idea that that was what they thought of her. She heard Maurice Bentley laugh uproariously at this.

"What an idea!" he said. "And don't you forget, Eve, that the grapefruit

was only a lemon that saw its chance and took it."

Every one chuckled over that, and Rebecca escaped.

That night, sitting in her room, she reviewed the situation. She was shy; she hated being with a lot of people; she hadn't a word to say for herself. Now she came to think of it, she had noticed that if one wanted to be any one nowadays one was saucy, not retiring.

What was it that Maurice had said? "The grapefruit was only a lemon that saw its chance and took it." She pondered over that, then got up and looked at herself in the glass. What a neat, quiet sort of a creature she was! The men wanted girls with some life in them, not little simpletons who wouldn't say boo to a goose! How did one set about becoming a grapefruit, if one was a lemon? She hadn't the slightest idea!

The next morning on her way to the office, she was surprised when Maurice Bentley joined her.

"Miss Dainton," he said, "the crowd in the office is having a party Saturday and we're all going down to my people's place at Ocean Point. We're going right from the office, Saturday noon, and I thought that you might like to come."

Anger flashed in Rebecca's eyes. Oh, the nerve of him!

"No, I wouldn't like to," she stormed and, stopping in the middle of the sidewalk, she stamped her tiny foot. "I call it an insult—your asking me!"

"An insult!" said Maurice, blinking. "I'm sure I never intended to be rude!"

"You didn't intend anything! All you wanted was another girl to even your party up, and you couldn't get any one else that was any good, so you fell back on me! Well, thank you very much for the invitation, but the answer is—a lemon!"

Now, why had she said that? Rebecca could have bitten off her tongue when she realized that she had given herself away! The color flooded her cheeks, and the shy, gray eyes drooped.

Maurice Bentley let out a whistle of astonishment, and then understanding came.

"So you overheard?" he muttered.

"I did!" Rebecca replied. "And that's why I feel it's horrid of you to have asked me."

"Well, seeing that you heard, I can quite understand you taking it like that. But, Miss Dainton, why don't you stop being a lemon? I suppose you heard everything, and my stupid joke about the grapefruit? You could be a grapefruit, you know."

"Yes, by laughing, and teasing people, and flirting."

"You've got an inferiority complex!" said Maurice Bentley.

"I'm sorry, Mr. Bentley," she said, "but I come from the country, and I don't understand what you're talking about."

There was a twinkle in Maurice's brown eyes as they rested on the indignant face of the girl walking beside him.

"An inferiority complex, my dear," he went on lightly, "is thinking the worst of yourself. I quickly found out when I came to the city that most people took you at your own valuation. If you feel you're the salt of the earth, you've some sort of likelihood of making people believe that you are the salt of the earth; if you feel like a worm your very attitude is mentally declaring: I'm a worm, step on me! And you can't be surprised if people do step on you, you know."

Rebecca thought that over. She had been at the office for nine months, and she was one of the best workers, and yet she recollected how twice there had been promotions. Each time a girl, who was not as good as she was, had got a raise. Was there something in what he was saying?

"Take two people," he continued, "for

instance, take me and Frank Gregory. We're both clerks in the same office. I shall ask for an increase next week, and I shall get it. Frank will wait until he is offered one, and that will be never, my dear."

Rebecca knew Frank. He wore big tortoise-shell glasses, and was generally as backward and shy as she was.

"As a matter of fact, you'll be paired off with Frank Gregory if you come Saturday." There was a mischievous look in his eyes. And, making a violent effort, Rebecca decided that she would accept.

"And don't forget," Maurice whispered, going up in the elevator, "that if you want to make a success of yourself in this life you've got to make other people recognize your good points!"

Rebecca thought a lot about that during the day.

At first it was sheer agony for Rebecca to sit besides Frank Gregory, and make conversation. She had never been with any one who was shyer than she was, and Frank hadn't a word to say for himself.

Then something happened which upset every one's calculations. Maurice, who was in the wildest of spirits, and Eve, who was almost as lively, determined to have a canoe race.

Thinking to show what a coward he was, Eve asked Frank to accompany her, and Maurice took Rebecca. At first Rebecca had wanted to refuse, but when she saw the look of amused scorn in Eve's eyes she decided to go with Maurice.

It was almost inevitable that something should happen, because both Eve and Maurice were reckless. Maurice was leading when Eve caught up to him and swung her canoe around so that it was across the path of Maurice's. There was no possible way of avoiding a crash. In a second the four of them were struggling in the water.

Rebecca was an expert swimmer, Eve and Maurice were quite capable, and they struck out for the shore. But when Rebecca looked around she saw that Frank had disappeared. When he came to the surface, gasping, and half-suffocated, she realized that he could not swim! Instantly she was beside him.

"Don't struggle," she warned him. "Just leave yourself to me, and I'll get you to land, but if you struggle we'll both drown."

Even in his desperate straits Frank Gregory realized the truth of what she was saying. He put himself in her hands, and found himself being drawn toward the shore. A few moments later, and he was sitting a damp, but thoroughly alive young man, on the bank, while Rebecca got her breath.

"What a mess!" cried Maurice disgustedly. "My clothes are ruined."

"Don't be silly!" said Rebecca curtly. "The thing you ought to be glad about is that nobody's drowned; after your silly exhibition there's nothing you've got to do but be grateful that it didn't mean Mr. Gregory losing his life. There must be some old clothes in your cottage."

Quite meekly they started for the house. Eve, feeling miserable, since the water had washed off her carefully-applied make-up and taken the wave out of her hair, was sullen and silent.

It was Rebecca who took charge of things. Dry clothes were found and put on; then Rebecca suggested that they could go and bask in the sun while their clothes were drying. There was no doubt about it, Eve did look queer in an old dress of Maurice's mother. He looked fat and portly in one of his father's suits. Frank Gregory, still tongue-tied, looked quaint in a pair of overalls, while Rebecca looked like a fresh-cheeked, little country girl in a faded house dress.

"We're not to sit still," she said.

"We've to run about and keep warm, especially you, Mr. Gregory. We'll run races."

Finally their clothes were dry and after the tea which Rebecca made, they decided they would go back to the city by train. Rebecca and Frank found a seat at the end of the car and wearily sank into it. It was then that Frank found his voice.

"I don't know how I can ever thank you, Miss Dainton, for saving my life," he said slowly. "You're marvelous. I'm such a dumb sort of person that I don't know how to tell you the way I feel about you. You're so wonderful, so clever that mere words seem inadequate."

Rebecca blinked as he said this.

"I'm such a dull fellow," he went on.

"You're nothing of the sort!" she said, decidedly. "Mr. Gregory, have you ever heard the saying—'The grapefruit was only a lemon that saw its chance and took it'?"

"No, I don't think I have," said Frank, blinking a little.

"Well, try and remember that, and then you won't be so afraid of yourself, or of other people. If you want to be a success in this life you mustn't have an inferiority complex. You must go about just as if you were worth considering. People take you at your own valuation."

"I know they do," said Frank. "But it's difficult to overcome shyness."

"If I were you," said Rebecca, earnestly, her eyes shining, "I should ask for a raise. You know they'll never give you one unless you ask for one. You're worth one; you are quite the best man in our department, and I'm sure if you ask for one, they'd think all the more of you."

He looked at her adoringly. It was wonderful to hear her talk.

"I believe you're quite right," he said, presently.

"Yes," he added, looking, and smiling shyly at her, "I am quite sure you are right!"

Rebecca laughed gayly.

"We'll see!" she said, softly.

A new manliness came to Frank Gregory. He threw back his shoulders, put out his chest, and did not avoid people so much. Once he was even found waiting in the lobby of the office building until Rebecca came down. He said she gave him courage.

"You've got such grit, and such confidence yourself that you inspire me," he told her, smiling shyly.

***Frank took Rebecca in his arms and eagerly kissed her soft lips.***

"I'm going to ask for a raise to-morrow," he went on, firmly.

"Good!" said Rebecca. "Maurice Bentley is going to ask for one at the same time, I think."

"Yes, he is," said Frank. "He told me that he didn't think I had it in me to push myself. I hadn't a few days ago, but I have now." His eyes rested on Rebecca for a moment, and he blushed, and then changed the subject.

The next day the two young men got a surprise. Maurice, asking for a raise, was refused.

"If you'd live up to your own opinion of yourself, Mr. Bentley," said the chief decidedly, "you'd be worth a raise, but you're too fond of good times and big talk. Humility is your strong suit for a little while."

Never was a man more taken aback! Frank, however, got a decided affirmative.

"I've got you marked down for promotion, Mr. Gregory," the boss said. "We want you to take charge of the accounting department. It will mean a big increase in salary, but your work has been so thoroughly satisfactory that we feel we are justified."

"Thank you very much, sir," said Frank. Then he turned and marched through the office, which was empty.

He snatched up his hat as he went out and hurried downstairs. He caught up with Rebecca just as she was going down into the subway.

"I got the raise, Rebecca!" he said jubilantly. "And it's all due to you! I want you to marry me! Perhaps to-morrow I shall have got back to my inferiority complex. To-day I feel that I am the king of the town! That's why I've got the nerve to ask you to marry me! Will you?"

Rebecca looked at him shyly from under her long lashes. Then she said softly, "I'll marry you, Frank. I love you," she added tenderly.

And there on the subway stairs, Frank took Rebecca in his arms and eagerly kissed her soft lips.

Among the many wedding presents that came for that happy young pair, was a set of grapefruit spoons from Maurice Bentley.

When Rebecca opened the case which contained them, she saw his card, and she picked it up, a smile curving her fresh young lips. She turned it over to see if there was a message. There was one, and she laughed aloud as she read it:

You're the grapefruit all right.
MAURICE BENTLEY.

# The Crimson Trail

## By Mona Farnsworth

**A Serial—Part III.**

CHAPTER V.

BUT hardly was the boat adrift when there came a shout from the house, and Fay, peering through the gathering dusk, saw men's heads at the little window they had just climbed out of.

"Oh, Barry," she almost sobbed in her relief. "Suppose they had caught us! Suppose——"

But she was interrupted by another shout from shore. Across the still waters of the Sound the men's voices carried clearly. They were shouting orders. Fay could hear the rattle of chains and then a splash.

"Barry," she whispered and it seemed as if her words froze in the still twilight air. "Barry, they're getting out another boat! They're going to chase us! Oh, Barry, what'll we do?"

"They won't catch us, sweetheart," he told her firmly, though deep in his own heart he had grave doubts. It was years since he had run a motor boat and this boat was an absolute stranger to him. He had no idea how fast she

would go; he wasn't sure of the amount of gas in the tank; he didn't have the least idea what part of the coast he had just left or what landmarks to use as guides. And the men coming in pursuit knew all these things. They were on territory they were very familiar with. They were daily accustomed to dodging in and out of the islands and coves that bordered the coast, and it was quite possible that the boat they had was bigger and better than this.

But Barry choked down his own doubts and fears. Whatever happened he must try to cheer Fay up. Poor girl, she had been through so much! If ever they got out of this terrible mess, Barry promised himself, he'd make it up to her! He'd dedicate all the rest of his life to making her happy!

"Come over here, sweetheart," he murmured, keeping one hand on the wheel for, though the course he had chosen might be wrong and might land them on the rocks he was mariner enough to stick to it.

Fay crept down the length of the boat and snuggled against his shoulder while his free arm held her close.

"I'm a silly girl to get worried or scared," she whispered, "when I have you to take care of me! Darling Barry!"

"You're a wonderful, brave girl!" Barry told her adoringly. "I don't believe there's another girl in the whole world who would have gone through all you have in the last two days and stayed so sweet and darling!"

Fay was silent. She didn't feel wonderful or brave. She felt cold and sick and miserable, and yet it was marvelous being in the little boat alone with Barry. He was so comforting, so dear. Just the feel of his arm around her shoulders; just the knowledge that he loved her; somehow it made the salt wind less wet and cold; somehow it made the gathering night less dark and the tumbling water ahead less filled with terror.

And then, just when she began to feel a little comforted, there came the roar of the pursuing motor! The boat was leaving the shore. But would they be able to see them in the dark? For by this time the dusk had really fallen. Fay and Barry, straining their eyes, could see nothing ahead but the black water. But another instant dashed that hope to the ground, for across the black water came the beam of a searchlight.

"Barry! Oh, Barry!" Fay crept farther into the shelter of his arm, shutting her eyes so that she wouldn't be able to see the pursuing boat as it came nearer and nearer. But suddenly she straightened up.

"Barry!" she gasped, "what was that?"

"What was what, darling?"

"Didn't you hear it? A sound! Right here in the boat! Barry! There's some one else in this boat! We're not alone!"

"Nonsense, sweetheart, you're imagining things." But the words froze on Barry's lips as, seemingly underneath their feet, came the sound of a long moan!

"I didn't do it!" groaned a hoarse voice. "I didn't do it!"

"Strike one of those matches you have," said Barry. "We've got to see. But don't get frightened—whoever it is must be sick or helpless. Here, darling, give me the matches, and you hold this wheel steady." Barry took the paper folder of matches from Fay's shaking hands and crouching down out of the wind struck one.

It spluttered and flared, while Fay and Barry stared in stunned amazement!

In the bottom of the boat, tied hand and foot, lay Arlette!

For an amazed moment Barry and Fay stared into the ghastly pale face of Arlette, then the match in Barry's fingers flickered and went out.

"Barry!" Fay gasped. "How did she

get here? Oh, Barry, here's the knife. Cut the ropes that bind her. I'll hold the wheel!"

Barry knelt down beside Arlette and, as gently as possible, cut the heavy ropes that were wound around her arms and legs. As he cut the last rope she opened her heavy eyes.

"I didn't do it!" her voice sounded as if she had tried to scream, but all that came from between her pale lips was an intense whisper. "I didn't do it! Leave me alone! You've done enough, you beast—oh," the whisper changed suddenly, "Barry, where did you come from?"

"It's a long story, Arlette," Barry's voice was gentle as if he were talking to a sick child. "Wait a minute and I'll take the wheel, dear. You see if you can find something to make her more comfortable, Fay, will you? She's lying there on the bottom of the boat."

Barry took the wheel, peering through the night as he offered up a silent prayer that he might steer the boat in safety to land, and that the gas wouldn't suddenly give out and leave them—adrift and helpless.

Fay crept across the boat and stooped over Arlette. The sick girl had closed her eyes again but her lips moved and Fay bent her head to catch what she was saying.

"Water," she was whispering faintly, "I've asked you and asked you for water. Gus, haven't you tortured me enough?"

Fay's tender heart went out to the suffering girl. What terrible experiences had she been through? What horrible things had Gus done to her? And where had he found her? When the men had come in to their dinner that noon they had been sure that Fay was Arlette.

"Water," Arlette's dry lips whispered again. "Water."

"Barry," Fay said helplessly, "I've just got to find her some water. It's dreadful! She's in agony. Do you suppose there's any in the boat at all?"

But before Barry could answer there came a shout from the pursuing boat, and simultaneously the blinding glare from a powerful searchlight poured over their little craft.

"Oh!" Fay closed her eyes against the glare and flung her hand up to shield them. "Barry! They've spotted us. Oh, what shall we do now?"

"Just keep going," Barry told her grimly. "Maybe our boat is faster than theirs, maybe something will happen." But his heart was quaking within him. Not more than a half mile of tumbling water separated the two boats and the other boat was gaining on them! Only a miracle could save them now and the age of miracles was past!

"Water," whispered Arlette. "Water."

The pitiful need of the sick girl made Fay forget for a moment her own terror. In the bright glare of the searchlight from the other boat everything in their own boat was thrown into sharp relief and to Fay's delight she was able to find a half-filled bottle under one of the seats.

"Do you suppose it is water?" she asked, holding it up.

Barry's eyes warmed with adoration as he looked at her. Here, in the face of danger worse than death, she was worrying about water for a sick girl. A girl she had every reason to hate, for it was through her that Fay herself had come into this horrible adventure. Barry's eyes were warm with love, and that deep adoration which is so much more than love, as he answered:

"It probably is water," he said, "but if you want to be sure just moisten the cork and hand it over here for me to taste."

"Yes, that's water all right," he reported a second later. "You can give it to her."

Still in the glaring brilliancy of that

terrible searchlight Fay bent over the sick Arlette and, supporting her head on her shoulder, tilted the bottle so the water might trickle through her parched lips.

A second later Arlette opened her eyes. As they fell on Fay they widened in wonder, and then darkened with memory.

"I know you," she said in a low, hoarse voice. "You're the girl who looks like me. I—I played a horrible joke on you and now you give me water! Oh!" Arlette's lovely eyes filled with tears, the enormous tears of weakness and self-pity. "Oh, I'm not fit to live! I'm a wretch—a miserable wretch!" She opened her eyes and immediately threw up her hand to protect them against the vivid glare. "What's that light?" she demanded, trying to sit up. "Where are we? What has happened and where did you and Barry come from?"

"That's Gus following us," said Fay trying to keep her voice steady and not betray the terror that threatened to shake it.

"Gus! Oh." Arlette slid down into the bottom of the boat again and covered her face with her trembling hands. "Oh," she sobbed weakly, "I thought—I hoped when I saw you and Barry—that it was all a bad dream! I—oh, don't let me fall into Gus's hands! If he catches us I'm going to kill myself! I can't stand it!"

"Here," said Fay softly, trying to soothe the hysterical girl, "take some more water. We'll get away from him. Don't be afraid. Barry will get us away." But for all her brave words Fay's heart was heavy with foreboding. Even her untrained ears could tell that the pursuing motor boat had a larger, stronger motor than theirs, and that they were gaining.

For, in addition to the faster boat, they had the tremendous advantage of the strong searchlight. And Barry had so little in his favor! He was struggling against such almost insuperable odds. He was putting his trust in a motor about which he knew nothing; he was attempting to travel through totally unfamiliar water without a thing to guide him except his instinct and the light from the boat behind that illumined the tumbling water ahead for a short distance.

Arlette drank the water gratefully that Fay held to her lips and a moment later, she was again sitting up staring with hard, unblinking eyes at the great eye of light that was coming nearer.

Fay stared at it, too. It hypnotized her like the eyes of a snake. Was it nearer now than it had been when she gave Arlette the water? It couldn't be! Oh, it couldn't! A shiver of ice fled down Fay's spine. What would they do to them when they had caught them? Now that they had the real Arlette would they let Fay and Barry go? For a moment Fay tried to cheer herself with this hope, but she knew it was false cheer.

"They're coming nearer!" Arlette whispered. "I tell you if they catch us I'm going to kill myself! I'm going to jump into the water——"

But Arlette never finished her sentence. There was a sudden shout from the boat behind, a smothered exclamation from Barry. The boat trembled and shook—and there was a sickening crunch of splintering wood!

"She's struck a rock!" shouted Barry. "Fay—oh, my darling!"

Fay's heart warmed with love. In the face of this new and yet greater danger Barry's first thought was of her. Her name was the one thing on his lips! Darling Barry! If this were the end, if they were all to drown, then at least they would die together. They would go out of this life clasped close in each other's arms, their last kiss moistened with the bitter salt water that was their doom!

***"Barry," she whispered, "they're getting out another boat! They're going to chase us! Oh, Barry, what'll we do?"***

But even as these terrible thoughts fled through Fay's mind they seemed to fade, and in their stead came the calm, quiet courage that had made her father the famous explorer and adventurer he had been. It almost seemed to her that she could hear his dear voice saying, "Steady, child, steady! Keep a clear head whatever happens." With this well-remembered voice ringing in her ears, Fay's tone was steady and calm as she answered Barry's shout of warning and love.

"All right. Don't worry about me, darling!"

Barry thrilled to the clear courage in her voice. What a glorious girl she was! Never a whimper—never a

moan! And after all the dreadful experience of the last two days she was meeting this crisis with clear eyes and a brave smile. Barry's heart glowed and throbbed with fresh love and adoration.

But there was no time to waste in thoughts of love. Already the water was bubbling and gurgling through the hole in the torn bow of the boat. It was, Barry realized, a matter of moments before the boat would sink. What could be done? What was there to do save make simple and rapid preparations for the lashing, white-capped waves that waited for them so hungrily?

Fay was busy kicking off her shoes and shaking herself free from her coat. She must not be weighted down with unnecessary clothing in the water.

"You'd better take off your shoes too," she said to Arlette, but the other girl stubbornly shook her head.

"I want to die," she said hoarsely. "What have I to live for? My life is ruined—ruined by that beast out there in the other boat. Oh—look! He's almost here! I'm going to jump! I'm not going to stay here and let him catch me!"

Fay sprang to grasp Arlette's arms and hold her in the boat. The water was up to their ankles now. In less than three minutes the boat would sink under them, but somehow she couldn't let Arlette jump before it was necessary. And the other boat had nearly reached them! Fay stared over her shoulder in horror. Which was better—the black forbidding water into which they must plunge immediately? Or the fate which awaited them at the hands of Gus and his men?

"Let me go!" Arlette was shouting in a frenzy. "Let me go! I want to die! I don't want to live! If Gus catches me he'll—he'll——"

But a shout from the other boat interrupted her, and at the same time their own craft gave a sickening lurch as the bow began to settle.

"Barry!" Fay called. "Help me hold her. She mustn't jump! She wants to drown herself. We mustn't let her—Barry help me!"

Barry sprang across the boat and held Arlette in his arms. She fought like a wild cat.

"Let me go!" she shrieked. "I don't want to live! I——" and suddenly her cries ceased. Her taut body relaxed, grew limp.

"She's fainted," said Fay gently. "Barry——"

She didn't finish her sentence but he knew what she meant. She was leaving it for him to decide their fate. Should they plunge into the water or should they allow themselves to be captured by Gus?

For a long moment Barry and Fay stared into each other's eyes. Barry's thoughts were in a turmoil.. How could he risk the life of the girl he loved in this treacherous black water? And yet how could he willfully decide that they again should fall into the baleful and wicked clutches of Gus?

But their fate was decided for them. The boat gave a sudden shudder and tipped so alarmingly that the water rose nearly to Fay's knees.

"Fay—jump!" Barry's voice was hoarse. "Jump as far from the boat as you can! If we're caught in the eddy as she goes down we're lost!"

Fay knew that. She knew that a boat as it sinks causes a small whirlpool that sucks anything near down with it. Her heart suddenly thudding with fear, she climbed onto the tilting edge and prepared to jump. Barry stood behind her with the unconscious form of Arlette in his arms. It was better, thought Fay, that she had fainted. It would make it easier for them to handle her in the water. For a second she stood on the heaving, tilting rim and then she dove straight into the black

water beyond the glare of the searchlight that never for an instant had allowed them to forget the fact that Gus and his gang were close on their heels.

As Fay's slim body clove the black tumbled surface of the water, her one thought was one of thankfulness that the swimming instructor at school had insisted that she spend long hours in the pool. The water held no horror for her and she knew her strength and trusted it. And yet what good was her strength and skill? She didn't even know which way the land lay! Suppose she should swim strongly and for hours —straight toward the open sea? And, besides, there was Arlette. She was still unconscious. Barry, who had jumped into the water with the girl in his arms, was holding her head clear of the waves while he swam slowly with one hand. Fay could see them dimly as the waves tossed her first high and then low.

And the searchlight! Just because the boat had splintered on a rock, it didn't mean that Gus and his gang would give up the chase. Even now the searchlight, sharp and cruel, was sweeping the black water, hunting for them. It would be a matter of moments before its brilliancy picked them out, and then a matter of seconds before the men drove the boat alongside and pulled them aboard.

Fay, with a few powerful strokes, joined Barry. He had managed to swing Arlette's unconscious body to the surface, so that she floated easily beside him.

"Darling!" his voice thrilled with relief. "Oh, Fay, sweetheart, are you all right? I—I wasn't even sure you could swim! I almost died in that instant when you were poised on the edge of the boat, but as soon as I saw you dive off I knew. Darling, that was a perfect dive!"

Fay laughed. Somehow, even in that black water, she felt safe with Barry. Just to be able to hear his voice—just to be able to know he was near. But almost instantly her laughter died in her throat. The swinging searchlight had found them! Suddenly from out of the night it blazed in their faces, a blinding sheet of brilliance that blinded them.

"Barry!" Fay's voice was sharp with fear and then she remembered that she mustn't be a coward. Whatever happened she must face it bravely, as her father would have her face it. The daughter of Clayton Danforth must have courage. But in that moment when she realized completely the utter hopelessness of making any farther attempt to get away from Gus; when she knew that no matter what they did, those men in the boat would get them, Fay found her heart growing weak within her.

She bit her lips to keep them from trembling. How hard it was to be brave! How cruelly hard to face the terrible experience that she knew was coming to her at the hands of those brutal men in the boat! Fay closed her eyes and her hands beat weakly on the waves. Maybe, after all, Arlette was right! Maybe it would be better to die, just relax and disappear under the waves, than to fall again into Gus's cruel hands!

"Fay." It was Barry's dear voice, deep and tender. "Fay, buck up! We'll get away from them again. We did this time. We can't give in." Had he read her mind? Had he guessed that she was thinking of doing just that? Oh, what a coward she was! She opened her eyes and for a long moment she and Barry gazed at each other. The waves tossed them heedlessly. Arlette's body floated between them, above them curved the great black bowl of the night sky, and around them poured the blinding searchlight. But slowly into Fay's trembling heart there drifted a strange sweet strength. She couldn't fail Barry!

***Barry sprang across the boat and held Arlette in his arms. She fought like a wild cat. "Let me go!" she shrieked. "I don't want to live!"***

Barry loved her; Barry thought she was brave, and she must be brave. What would Barry do if she gave up, like a miserable coward, and sank down into that black water?

Fay's lips stopped trembling and she smiled. "I'm all right, darling," she said quietly. "Here—let me help you with Arlette."

"Here they are!" It was a hoarse cry from across the water. "Here you—stop the engine and swing her around—look out!" And there followed a long string of oaths.

Fay's wet cheeks grew white, but her pointed little chin set. There was no way out. She and Barry were helpless.

It seemed an eternity that she and Barry waited in the black water for their doom to come to them. The boat was near now—the men's hoarse voices making the night a thing of horror. One or two of them were evidently drunk. Fay could see Gus's face, red and brutal, his thick lips spreading into a smile, his eyes glinting under their black brows. Oh, why couldn't they have got safely away? Why did this further nightmare have to happen to them?

"Here's a rope," shouted some one. "Grab on, you crazy fools, and hurry up about it or we'll leave you to drown!"

As if she were really in a nightmare Fay caught hold of the rope and, hand over hand, the men pulled them toward the boat.

"Come on, you," one of them said catching hold of her hand. "Help yourself a little bit, can't you? You don't need to act like a sack of flour!"

"Speak decently," growled Barry, as he pulled himself into the boat.

"Oh, yeah?" the man turned on him with a nasty leer. "And if I don't want to what'll you do to me, huh?" The men all laughed and poor Barry's face grew scarlet, while he clenched his hands helplessly.

"Come on, my pretty," said Gus to Fay. "Come on over here and sit down beside old Gus. By the king's whiskers! I thought Arlette was pretty, but you have her beat forty ways! How'd you like to come stay with Gus, eh? Come on—give us a kiss! No? You don't want to? Well, well—there's lots of time!" He laughed and Fay shrank as far away from him as she could.

Barry sat alone, seething with fury. And yet he was helpless. He had to sit there gritting his teeth and clenching his fists while a great, dirty brute of a gangster insulted the girl he loved. His blood pounded in his temples and it seemed to him that a red haze blurred everything in the boat.

"Turn off that light," Gus yelled suddenly. "What do you want to do—tell the snoopers all about us?"

In a flash the light was out and a sudden thick blackness seemed to drop like a smothering blanket over the boat. Fay could feel an ominous stirring among the men—a sense of nervous unrest. What was happening? What were they afraid of? And what had Gus meant by the snoopers?

But her thoughts were suddenly interrupted by Arlette, stirring in the darkness by her side. Till now she had lain, inert and lifeless, on the narrow seat beside Fay, but now she moved and her voice, faint as it was, cut the darkness and the strange silence like a knife.

"Where am I?" she asked. "Fay! Barry! What's happened to us?"

"Shut up!" growled Gus. "Keep your face closed, you little——"

Fay could feel Arlette shudder at the sound of the dreaded voice.

"Oh!" she moaned softly. "Oh, why didn't I die? Why didn't they let me drown? I didn't want——"

"Shut up!" growled Gus again. "Keep that trap of yours closed tight or I'll——"

For a few seconds there was silence, then Fay felt Arlette raising herself cautiously on the seat and a moment later a barely perceptible whisper drifted to her ear.

"Why do they want us to keep still?" Arlette asked, and there was a strange thrill in her whisper.

"I don't know," Fay whispered back. "Gus ordered the light out and said something about snoopers——"

To Fay's surprise she thought she felt Arlette laughing, or was she crying? But a second later came another whisper, and now the laugh was unmistakable.

"Oh, Fay, we're saved!" Arlette moved a little. "Listen. I know where

that light is or, better still when I say all right, you yell for help!"

"But what good can it do?" Fay wondered in her bewilderment if Arlette had gone mad. "There's not a soul to come and help us!"

For answer Arlette gestured dimly over her shoulder. "See that dark shadow over there? You can hardly see it against the black water, but it's there. It's the snoopers. Now wait till I say 'all right,' and you yell, but duck at the same time because Gus may shoot!"

For a long moment there was silence. Again the feeling swept over Fay that this was just a bad dream and that soon she must wake up to find herself in her own bed or else on the divan in Barry's studio.

Through the darkness she strained her eyes toward the shadow Arlette had mentioned. Was there something off there in the dark night? Was it another boat? Yes! For clearly now, above the sound of their own engine, she could detect the *put-put* of another engine. But what good could even another boat do them? Who would bother to force another motor boat to stop, who would be able to? Especially a boat filled with reckless gangsters? No, Arlette was insane, the drug she was addicted to had affected her mind, there was no hope. There could be none.

"Now!" Arlette leaned near and her whispered breath swept across Fay's cheek. "Now! Yell for help—yell loud—and duck!"

Fay obeyed blindly but somehow in a wild hope that Arlette wasn't as crazy as she sounded. Together they let out a yell that split the night like a flaming rocket.

Instantly Gus turned on them. "What in blazes are you yelling for!" His voice was low but shaking with fury. "If I was on land I'd shoot you as full of holes as a Swiss cheese! Shut up! Shut up I say." And then there followed a string of curses that made Fay cover her ears.

Obediently she and Arlette shut up. "It's all right." Again Arlette's voice held that note of chuckling laughter. "All we have to do now is wait."

Wait for what?—wondered Fay. The tiny spurt of hope she had felt as she had shouted for help died down. But a second later it came to life again! The motor, that other motor off somewhere in the blackness, increased its speed and an instant later a voice boomed out of the night.

"Ship ahoy! Stop your motor or we'll shoot!"

With a muttered oath Gus let out his engine and the boat seemed to rip through the water. The next moment a streak of light and the roar of a gun came from the other boat.

"They're shooting across our bows," whispered Arlette. "They'll shoot us if Gus doesn't stop."

But Gus didn't stop. He let out the engine as far as she would go and the boat seemed hardly to touch the water as she skimmed along. But the other boat was gaining. Fay could see it now, looming up behind them out of the blackness. A big boat; a long, slender fast boat, faster than theirs, that cut the water clean like a new knife.

But Gus sped on. He was zigzagging his course now in an effort to avoid further shots from his pursuer. Fay watched his shadowy figure in fascinated horror. Why didn't he stop?

## CHAPTER VI.

The moments stretched on in a breathless eternity. Fay longed to creep across the boat and snuggle into Barry's arms, but she didn't dare move. She was shivering with cold. Her wet clothes clung to her in clammy folds as the night wind whistled through them. She and Arlette huddled together in speechless misery.

"It won't be long now," whispered Arlette suddenly. "Look!"

Fay looked behind them. The other boat was almost alongside! Again a shout boomed out of the darkness, and Fay could see a dim shadow of a man with a megaphone to his lips.

"Stop that motor or we'll sink you!"

This time Gus obeyed, though the night was filled with his vile oaths until Fay's heart trembled within her. For he blamed this predicament entirely on the girls. If they had kept quiet he never would have been noticed. And Fay knew that was true. If she and Arlette hadn't yelled for help just when they did, Gus would have escaped safely.

In silence Arlette and Fay listened to the commands from the other boat, watched the ropes flung out and their boat made secure. Then, suddenly, a searchlight was turned on them and in the swift blaze of light Fay saw uniforms and officers and she understood. This was a revenue cutter—and the snoopers were Federal agents. For the first time she understood Arlette's delighted chuckle. Arlette had cleverly planned the whole thing! She had seen the boat lying, a dark shadow against the sky; she had heard Gus's warning about the snoopers and she had screamed for help at the right moment. But why, Fay wondered instantly, should she lead Gus into the hands of Federal agents when she herself was running away from the police?

And at that thought Fay shrank away from the brilliant searchlight. What would the government agents do when they discovered that she and Arlette were wanted for the murder of Gordon Craig? This wasn't a rescue! This was capture! They had simply fallen from the frying pan into the fire. Arlette hadn't been clever. She had been insane! And yet wasn't it better to be in the hands of the police than in the hands of Gus and his gang? Fay, bewildered by the myriad thoughts tumbling through her head, shivering with cold, wet and miserable, could do nothing but sit silent, as if turned to marble, in the terrible glare of that relentless searchlight.

There was a flurry of confusion as the officers jumped from their own motor boat down into Gus's. There were shouted questions and surly, growling answers from the men. And then, suddenly, the officer's eyes widened as he stared unbelievingly at Fay.

"You're the girl that's wanted for the Gordon Craig murder!" he said. "And don't try to deny it for your picture's in every paper in the country!" And then, before Fay could speak, he saw Arlette. "Why," he spluttered, "what—are there two of you?"

"Look here, officer." Barry bounded up from his seat and crossed the boat. "The circumstances of this whole thing are peculiar. In fact it makes just about the weirdest story I've ever known. This girl here"—he gestured toward Fay—"is absolutely innocent. I swear she is! She knows nothing about the crime——"

"And neither do I!" interrupted Arlette. "At least I—I mean I didn't commit any crime."

"You come along with me," the officer broke in. "And tell whatever you've got to tell to a judge. I'm not supposed to listen to stories. I'm supposed to bring in the goods. Now come along."

"You haven't any right to take us with you!" Gus shouted. "You haven't got anything on us!"

"Oh, hasn't he?" asked Arlette in a voice suddenly turned silky smooth. "Where were *you* at the time of Gordon Craig's murder?"

Every one in the boat turned to stare at Gus. What did Arlette mean? What implication lay behind her soft words? Fay stared with wide eyes—eyes that grew even wider and more amazed as

she saw the terrible change in Gus's face. He grew livid and his mouth snapped open in an evil snarl while into his eyes crept an unmistakable look of fear.

The officer looked from one to the other—from these two girls who looked so amazingly alike to this huge, evil-faced man with the tiny black eyes.

"You'll come with me all of you," he decided finally. "Maybe you've done something, maybe you haven't—we'll let a judge decide that, but come along."

He gave a few curt orders to the men in the revenue cutter, and a few moments later she was headed toward New York with Gus's boat bobbing and dancing in her wake.

Fay never was to forget that trip. The gray-black shape of the cutter steaming on ahead; the officer sitting in their boat, his hand suggestively resting on his revolver; Gus and the men crowded into the bow of the boat, sitting silent and surly, their heads sunk on their breasts, their eyes glinting occasionally. Arlette also had relapsed into silence, her face white and drawn, her hands clenched into tight little fists as if she were struggling for control. At first Fay tried to talk to her but Arlette refused even to answer. She just sat there, her pale face almost shining in the dark, it was so white.

Barry had managed to sit beside Fay and her one comfort during that long, silent trip back to New York and probably jail was the clasp of his dear hand. Quietly they sat, his warm fingers curled protectingly about her slim cold ones, and through the slight contact flowed the dear knowledge of his strong love.

At last the lights of the city came into view, throwing their brilliant glare against the dark sky. Fay had no idea what time it was but she knew it must be near dawn. What was going to happen to them now? Would they be taken to a jail and put in cells? Would they have to appear before a whole courtroom full of people? Her heart sank at the prospect of such hideous publicity. Her name, Fay Danforth, the daughter of Clayton Danforth, in glaring headlines! Oh, it was horrible! But she mustn't give in now. She had managed to hold her head up and keep her lips steady so far, and she must see the thing through to the end. Of course she would have to go through with it anyhow, because the police would make her. But she would go with her chin firm and her eyes steady, as her father would have her do, and as Barry expected her to do!

The cutter slid slowly up the river and tied to a dock.

"Come on," said the officer, holding his revolver in readiness. "Get out of there and don't try any funny business!"

Barry helped Fay and Arlette climb up the short ladder that led to the dock. Fay's muscles were so cramped and stiff with the long hours sitting in her sodden clothes that she could hardly move. She was shaking with cold and almost paralyzed with weariness.

"Be brave for a little while longer, darling," Barry whispered, half-supporting her with his arm. "We'll make the men in the police station believe us. They can't hold a lovely brave thing like you!"

"Here, there," said the officer, "no whispering. Say what you've got to say out loud or keep still."

Arlette came slowly over and stood beside them. For the first time in hours Fay got a good look at her face, and she was appalled at what she saw. Arlette looked like another person. Her cheeks had grown hollow, her eyes sunken and there were deep lines of suffering at her mouth.

"Arlette!" Fay exclaimed. "You're sick!"

"Shut up," said Arlette in a strange, hoarse voice. "What do you know about what's the matter with me? I'll be all right in a little while."

Fay stared in amazement. What had happened to her? She hadn't talked this way before. And she hadn't looked this way. And yet, it seemed to Fay, that she remembered her looking like this before. When was it? And then she remembered. It was that morning that she and Barry had seen Arlette standing on the sidewalk on Bleecker Street talking to the ratlike man. And then Fay remembered, too, that Gus had said later that Arlette looked that way because she needed a "shot." Then that was what was the matter with her now!

A sudden wave of pity swept over Fay. What a terrible thing it must be to be in the grasp of a hideous thing like drugs! She must do something to help Arlette. She must! In her quick sympathy she put her hand on the other girl's arm.

"Arlette," she said softly.

"Oh, shut up and leave me alone." Arlette turned on her with a snarl. "You little goody-goody! What do you know about how I feel?"

"I know I'd like to help you," Fay said gently. "Isn't there something I can do?"

Arlette turned at the persistent sympathy in Fay's tone and for a second her face softened, then it twisted again into a sneer.

"What can you do?" she asked sarcastically. "You don't even know——"

"I know that somehow, probably by accident, you have gotten into the habit of taking drugs," Fay interrupted quietly. "I heard Gus say you had. Barry and I both know it. Oh, won't you let us help you? We do want to help you, don't we, Barry?"

"Of course we do, Arlette."

"Well, you can't," said Arlette shortly. "Nobody could help but Gordon, and he's—he's dead!"

"You mean you killed him!" said the officer who had overheard the last remark.

"I did not!" flamed Arlette. "I didn't kill him! Don't you dare——"

"All right—all right," growled the officer. "Save your tears for the jury. They'll appreciate 'em. Come along—here's the wagon!"

Barry sprang forward. "Officer, must these girls travel in the wagon? Can't you accept my word that I'll bring them to the station house in a taxi?"

"Sorry," the officer said shortly. "No taxis—in you go!"

"I really don't mind, Barry," said Fay gently as she saw Barry's mouth draw down in a grim line. "After all we've been through to-night—what's a ride in the Black Maria?" And she actually laughed.

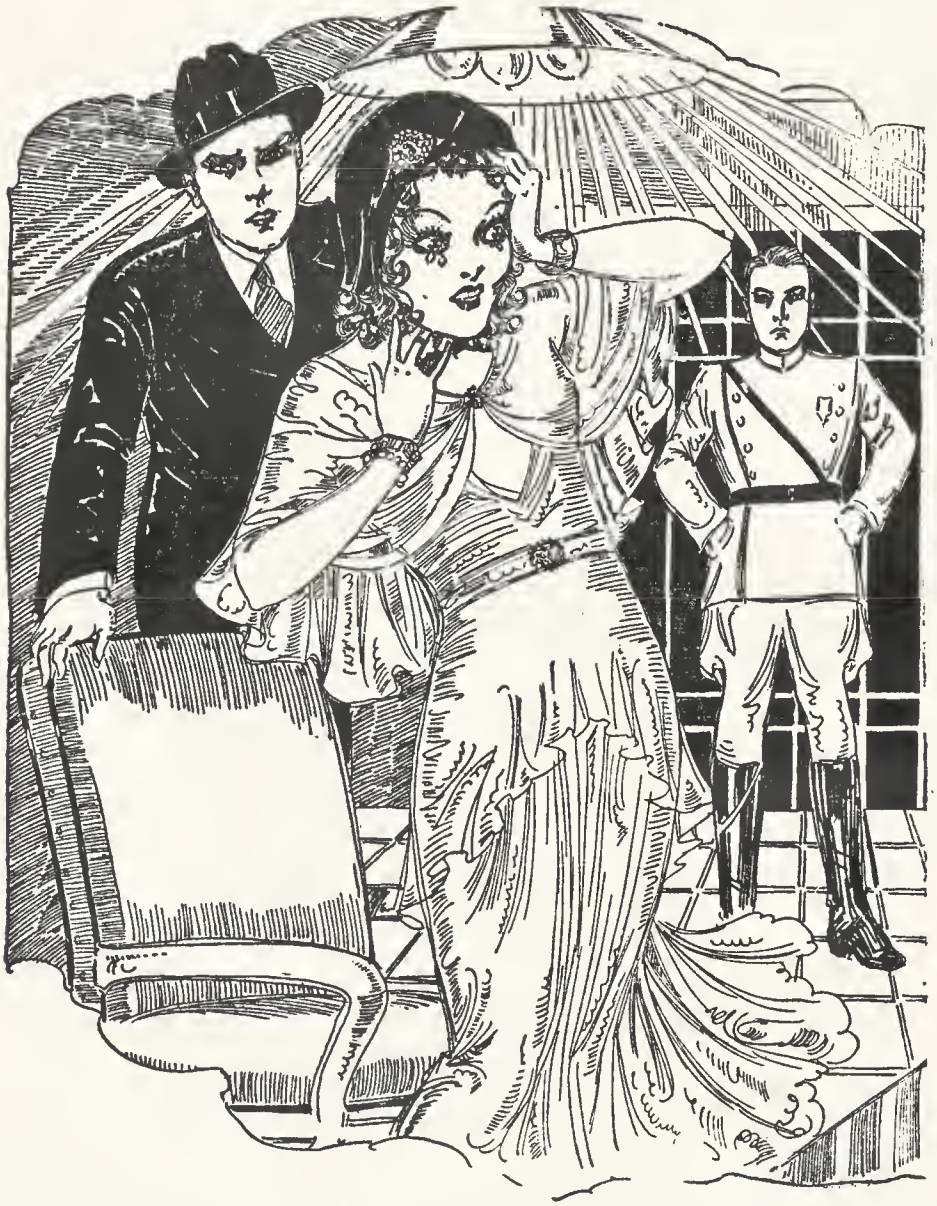
Barry stared at her in amazement. No matter how he adored her, there was always more to adore. What a glorious girl! Facing death and danger and imprisonment, and she could laugh as she stepped into the sinister darkness of the police patrol!

The short ride to the police station was completed in that same grim silence that had marked the trip to New York. Fay sat next to Arlette on the narrow plank seat. Arlette was shaking now, as from a chill, and Fay slipped her arm around the other girl's shoulders comfortingly. At first Arlette tried to sneer and shake it off, then she glanced up at Fay and there was a strange light in her eyes.

"Honest," she whispered hoarsely, "would you and Barry help me?"

"Of course," Fay whispered tightening her arm. "And I'm sure we'll make you well again. Now see if you can't relax a minute."

But Arlette shivered and shook. "You don't know what it is," she sobbed. "You don't know! If I don't get a shot soon I'll go mad! Oh, you can talk and talk but I won't ever be cured! I'm lost, and I wish I was dead! Gus!" she screamed suddenly. "Why don't you say something?"



***"Give me a shot!" she moaned through white lips. "I'll go mad! I can't stand it!" She sprang from her chair and tramped up and down the room like a crazy person.***

"Shut up!" Gus growled viciously. It was the first time he had spoken in hours. "Stop yapping, you little fool!"

"I won't stop," screamed Arlette. "All this is your fault! And I'm going to get you! I'm going to tell them that——"

"Here! Quit that!" The officer leaped at Gus as he seemed to hurl himself down the wagon toward Arlette.

"Sit back there and shut up or I'll make you shut up!"

Fay sat in trembling silence. What did it all mean? What was Arlette going to tell? And why did she blame Gus?

With a last bounce over the cobbles the wagon drew up at the station house and, just as the first streaks of dawn tinged the sky, Fay and Arlette and Barry followed by Gus and his gang, stumbled up the steps and faced a sleepy, indifferent man at the desk.

But five minutes later he was neither sleepy nor indifferent.

"So these are the girls who murdered Gordon Craig!" he muttered staring at them.

"No," said Fay quietly, "we are not. We know nothing about the murder."

"You don't," said Arlette grimly, "but I do."

"You do, huh?" the officer said. "Well, take 'em away and question 'em," he said to a man standing by the desk. "Find out what they know and then lock 'em up. This ought to be good."

Lock 'em up! As Fay followed the detective down a series of long corridors the words echoed in her mind. Was she to be locked up in a cell? Wouldn't her story be believed and wouldn't she be allowed to go free? It seemed to her, as she walked slowly along with Arlette and Barry, for Gus and his gang had been sent off with another officer, that she was nearly at the end of her strength. Her knees sank beneath her weight, her head throbbed and beat agonizingly, everything was a blur before her tired eyes. Why wouldn't they take her somewhere and let her rest?

But there was to be no rest for Fay for many long hours—hours when all manner of questions were fired at her by hard-mouthed, hard-eyed men, who tried to shake her story, tried to make her say that, in some way, she had been connected with the murder of Gordon Craig.

But Fay didn't know the ordeal that was before her as she stumbled wearily into the big white room, the door of which the detective held open for her and Arlette and Barry. They were so exhausted that they almost fell into the chairs offered them. Fay closed her eyes.

"I'm sorry," the detective said, not unkindly. "You must open your eyes. Now," he turned to Arlette, "I understand you have a story——"

But before Arlette could answer Barry intervened.

"I wonder if I may offer a suggestion," he said slowly and something in his low, quiet voice drew the detective's attention at once. "I think you will be able to grasp a clearer idea of this strange predicament we are all in if I tell you first the story of Miss Danforth and myself——" And, at the man's nod of assent Barry went on and retailed the entire adventure.

He told how Fay had come to New York a stranger and about her search for work. He told how she had answered the advertisement Gordon Craig put in the paper and how she had met Arlette for the first time in the foyer-hall of Craig's studio-apartment. And then he went on, talking slowly in his deep, kind voice and described their entire horrible adventure that had ended or rather that was still continuing, for no one could tell how it would end.

"I can tell," Arlette burst out, her eyes blazing in her white face. "Let me talk! These people—Fay and Barry—have nothing to do with the murder! They're as innocent as a newborn babe. Barry's story's all true. Every word of it."

"Then you did, deliberately, run away, leaving Miss Danforth to take your place there in the studio?" the detective snapped at her. "And you knew she would be implicated in the murder?"

"I knew she would be mistaken for me," Arlette said earnestly. "But I knew, too, that I'd be able to produce the real murderer sooner if I could work freely without having the police on my heels. I would have too—if—but I——" she stumbled and finally stopped talking entirely.

"Go on," said the detective grimly. "Tell us why you didn't turn this real murderer of Gordon Craig's over to the police."

For a long moment Arlette said nothing, though it was obvious she was going through some strange and terrible struggle with herself. Her white face grew, if possible, more livid and her eyes that were wild and bright blazed with an uncanny fire. She bit her lips

and clenched her thin hands in an agony of self-control, and then she broke.

"Give me a shot!" she moaned through white lips. "Give me a shot and I'll talk. I can't talk this way. I've tried to hold in—I've tried to pull myself together. I can't! Oh, give me some morphine—get a doctor and he'll give me some. I'll go mad! I can't stand it!" She sprang from her chair and tramped up and down the room like a crazy person.

"How do we know you'll talk," asked the detective.

"She will," said Fay quietly. "Arlette is all right when she isn't this way."

Arlette turned to her and even in her agony she realized the deep understanding gentleness in the other girl's tone. She stopped her frenzied pacing and came over and stared questioningly down into Fay's face.

"Do you mean to say that you and Barry will still help me after you've seen me now?" she asked incredulously, a queer look in her eyes.

"Of course," Fay replied softly. "We'll help you till you're cured, won't we, Barry?"

"We will, Arlette," said Barry kindly, his eyes adoringly fastened not on Arlette's haggard face but on the radiant features of the girl he loved. "Fay and I are your friends. If she feels you need help that's enough for me."

"Here's the doctor," announced the detective. "She says she'll talk, doc, if you give her a shot."

The doctor nodded and took out his kit with a professional air. How many of these poor drug addicts there must be, Fay thought as she watched him, when he could look at Arlette with such a matter-of-fact air. How terrible life could be! How cruel! But she and Barry would manage to have Arlette cured, for somehow this girl who looked so much like herself had appealed deeply to her always warm sympathy.

The doctor had shot the injection into the arm Arlette had held toward him and then he had packed up his kit and disappeared. The change in the girl was amazing. In almost no time at all a faint color came back into her cheeks, her face seemed to grow fuller and assume the smooth perfect oval of Fay's own lovely features, and her eyes lost their tragic wild light. In a moment she was sitting in her chair, relaxed and calm, with a faint smile on her suddenly lovely lips. Fay wondered, as she watched the almost miraculous change in her, which was the most astounding, the change she had undergone in the boat, when she needed the drug, or this change now when she had been given it.

"Now," said the detective, his eyes on her face, "spill your story."

"The real beginning is way back when I got into a taxi accident and hurt my back. I was a dancer, and when I found I'd never dance again I wanted to die. The pain was dreadful, there in the hospital, and they used to give me drugs. And when I got out I couldn't get on without them."

"Where'd you get it?" asked the detective sharply.

"I'm coming to that," Arlette said. "At first I got it from the doctors. The pain in my back was still so bad that some nights I had to take it so I could sleep. But finally when the pain did stop I kept on taking the drug. It had me. Lots of times I'd try to stop, but I couldn't. I'd get just the way I was to-night. I didn't know what I was doing. I'd almost have killed some one if I thought that by doing that I'd be able to satisfy the craving. It's terrible.

"Well, it was then I met Gus. He sold me the stuff. At first everything was all right. It was all right for about a year, and then I met Gordon Craig. I went there to his studio to pose for him, and I fell in love with him. Oh, everybody knew I was in love with him,

and they knew, too, that he didn't care a bang for me. Well, that's not quite true—he did. He was the best friend I ever had, but he didn't care in the way I wanted him to."

"He was married," suggested the detective.

"Yes, but he hadn't been living with his wife for a long time. That wasn't the reason. He knew about—about the dope. He said he couldn't love any one tied to a habit, and he didn't have enough faith in me to help me break it."

"Well, what's all this got to do with the murder?" asked the detective impatiently. "Get on with your story."

"I'm coming to the—the murder," said Arlette. "Gus found out that I posed for Gordon and some one told him I was crazy about him. Gus came to me like a wild man. He said he'd been crazy about me for a long time. He said that he wanted me to come down to his place on the Connecticut shore and—and live with him and join his gang. I said I wouldn't. We had an awful fight and it ended with his swearing that if I didn't stop seeing Gordon and posing for him that—that he'd kill him!"

"Huh!" The detective snorted sarcastically. "And you expect us to believe that? You expect us to believe that you, caught red-handed in the studio, had nothing to do with the murder? If you loved this man so much and you knew that this Gus would kill him if you went there again what did you go there for?"

"I went there to—to say that I was going away," Arlette said defiantly. "I wanted to say good-by——"

"Oh, you did! Well, you said good-by all right!" At the hard note in the man's one all three of his listeners winced as if they had been struck. "And who are you going to hang this murder on, then—Gus?"

"Yes—Gus!" Arlette cried.

"And you think he did it just because he threatened to? You think you can hang it onto him——"

"I'm not thinking," Arlette broke in, her voice clear and strong. "I know! I saw him do it!"

For a long moment there was a dead silence. It seemed to Fay that the whole world had stopped to listen—that the very universe stood still waiting for whatever was going to happen next. Then the hard, unbelieving voice of the detective broke the stillness.

"Go on," he said coldly. "How did you see him?"

"I went to Gordon's studio about four o'clock," said Arlette slowly. "I rang downstairs and some one ticked to let me in, so I knew he was there. I was on the stairs when I heard loud voices in some sort of argument. I never thought of Gus. In the first place all I was going to do was to say good-by to Gordon, and in the second place I thought Gus was away. And then, suddenly, I recognized his voice! I—I was scared to death because I knew he had come to kill Gordon. I ran up the stairs as fast as I could—it seemed that my feet were made of lead. Oh, I thought I'd never get up those stairs! And when I did—when I finally got to the top and opened Gordon's door——" She stopped, her face ghastly white and twisted with pain at the memory of that awful afternoon.

"It was too late," she said slowly. "When I got to the door of the studio I saw Gus standing in the window of the little iron balcony with a revolver in his hand. And Gordon—Gordon was—was——" Arlette choked with emotion and couldn't go on. Fay reached over and touched her hand with quiet understanding and sympathy.

Suppose, Fay thought, just suppose that something dreadful happened to Barry? How could she stand it? But then Barry loved her, and Gordon hadn't loved Arlette. Maybe that

would make it easier. But in her heart Fay knew it wouldn't. She would love Barry as she loved him now whether he loved her or not. She would love Barry always, forever and ever. Tired as she was, and almost fainting from hunger and exhaustion, Fay thrilled to the remembered glory of Barry's kisses and his dear voice whispering "I love you!"

But the hard voice of the detective broke into her daydreams. "It's a good story," he said brutally, looking at Ar-

***She was conscious of the warmth of the bright fire, and then, as Barry laid her on the broad divan, she knew no more.***

lette who was dabbing her eyes with a sodden handkerchief, "but why should we believe it?"

Barry started forward. "Good heavens, man, can't you see the girl's telling the truth?"

"What do I care what I see?" snapped the detective, "I want proof—Gus hasn't confessed, has he?"

"No," said Arlette, her tone almost as snappy as his. "But you can make him."

But they couldn't make him. For hours and hours as the morning drifted into afternoon and finally faded into another night Fay and Arlette and Barry sat there answering questions, offering explanations in the faces of a series of hard-eyed incredulous men.

And Gus, in another part of the building, kept his mouth closed. They were all questioned together, they were questioned separately and finally Fay became so exhausted she could hardly sit in her chair. But still they were not permitted to rest or to sleep. Two or three times Barry went out and brought back sandwiches and coffee, for Barry was in reality a free man. It was only the girls who were being held.

"Oh, sweetheart," he said about nine o'clock that evening as he brought a plate of sandwiches and a cup of steaming coffee to Fay. "Sweetheart darling, I'll go mad if I can't get you out of this mess soon!"

"Don't worry about me," whispered Fay leaning her head weakly against his broad shoulder. "It can't last much longer. They'll find a way to make Gus talk. They must! Oh, Barry, I do love you so!"

Barry gathered her into his arms in spite of the fact that the iron-faced detective was watching them.

"You're the most marvelous girl in the world," he told her softly. "There isn't another girl anywhere who could have gone through all this mess and stayed as sweet and brave and patient as you have. You're my wonder girl!" He bent and gently brushed his lips across her golden curls.

"Barry, why were you so glad to see Arlette that day on Fifth Avenue?" Fay bit her lips as soon as the question was out. She hadn't meant to ask that, but she was just too tired to stop the words. Now she glanced up at Barry in sudden embarrassment. How silly he would think her to ask such a question at a time like this!

But Barry was smiling as if he didn't think the question foolish at all.

"Has that been worrying you?" he asked playfully. "I suppose maybe I did seem pretty glad to see her—you—that day. You see she had started posing for me and when the statue was half finished she got mad over something—I've forgotten what—and went off and said she'd never pose for me again. I tried a couple of other models but they wouldn't do. That's why I was so glad to see Arlette, because when she—I mean you—said you weren't mad at me any more that meant you—or she—would come back and pose again."

Fay laughed, partly at the absurd way Barry mixed her with Arlette and partly at the wave of relief that swept over her at hearing from Barry's own lips the explanation of his feeling toward Arlette. For now that Fay had begun to be really fond of the other girl, and especially now that she had become so determined to help her, it would be dreadful if she held even the faintest feeling of jealousy. But now, with Barry's words, and with his dear eyes full of love so near, she knew that never again would she feel the slightest pang. She knew now that forever and ever his dear heart was to be in her keeping.

"Darling Barry." Fay leaned her head against his shoulder, basking in the warmth of his love. "You're so strong—you're so——"

The sudden bursting open of the door broke into her words.

"He's confessed!" A man ran in waving a sheet of paper. "We've got it all down! The girl's story is O. K. You can let 'em go——"

Fay didn't hear any more. The whole room became a blur—a whirling, dizzy place of running feet and confused sounds and shouting, excited voices. Only one thing was clear to her. Now she could go to sleep. Now she could rest. It was all over!

Dimly she was aware that Barry was leading her to a taxi. Dazedly she knew that he was holding her gently in his arms, that her aching body was warm and comfortable and that he was whispering and crooning to her. She knew she was surrounded and drenched in his love and she was at rest and at peace.

When they reached the studio he carried her upstairs like a baby. She was too exhausted to demur, almost too blind with sleep to know what was happening. She was conscious of the warmth of the bright fire, and then, as Barry laid her on the broad divan, she knew no more.

When Fay awoke the bright sunlight was streaming into the room. For a long moment she lay quiet collecting her thoughts, wondering why she should feel so filled with aches and bruises. Then she remembered the whole terrible adventure of the past few days. But she remembered, too, that it was all over; that Barry had carried her safely here in his dear strong arms. Where was Barry now?

She sprang out of bed, straightening her crushed and ruined clothes as well as she could, and opened the studio door. Barry was sitting on the stairs waiting for her to wake up.

"Hello, darling." He jumped up and came to her, gathering her in his arms and holding her close. "How are you?" He held her off to look at her and then drew her close, kissing her sweet lips still dewy with sleep.

"I'm fine, darling." She laughed up into his handsome dear face. "But terribly hungry."

"Good!" Barry led her back into the studio and closed the door. "We'll have some sausages and coffee and then we're going to get married!"

"Oh, Barry, we can't!" Fay's voice was dismayed. "Why—why—I can't be married in these clothes."

"We'll get you new clothes," said Barry, grinding coffee vigorously. "I'll get you anything you want, but you've got to marry me to-day! Come on—promise!" He swept her into his arms, tilting her lovely head back till his lips were crushed against hers.

And Fay knew, as she surrendered completely to that deep and thrilling embrace that there was nothing she wanted more in the whole world than to become Barry's wife and walk with him down the glorious path of life that stretched away before their happy feet.

THE END.

# The Way Of Her Heart

## By Muriel Page

EVE DALLAS sat staring before her with horror-filled eyes. Clasped in her hand was the long envelope which she had just discovered in the file of letters she had been going through, and she knew that in that envelope lay the death warrant of all her ambitions.

But it was not only of herself that she was thinking.

The mistake she had made—a mistake which she found it almost impossible to explain even to herself—would cost the firm where she was employed something like twenty thousand dollars.

It was six months ago now since Eve had first been engaged as secretary to Blaise Villiers.

Blaise Villiers had the reputation of being absolutely ruthless in business, a hard boss, and one who never spared either himself or those under him. Nevertheless, Eve had been delighted when she got the position, although it was a very responsible one for a girl so young.

Blaise Villiers believed in youth. He was only thirty-five himself, and it was his almost magical grasp of business details, his demand for the same efficiency among his staff that he displayed himself, which had put the firm of which he was now the head in the position it occupied.

Eve was never quite sure of her feelings regarding him. He could be so charming, and he could, as she knew by experience, be brutal. There were times when he attracted her strangely,

and others when she felt that she hated him.

There was something in her which resented his dominant personality, the way he swept everything aside which stood in the path of his desire. Nevertheless, it had made her very proud to think that he trusted and relied upon her; and now that was all ended.

She could have sworn that the contract which she had just discovered had been mailed three weeks before. The business it concerned was with a firm in London, and before he left for the trip from which he had just returned, Blaise Villiers had given her instructions to mail it at once.

She remembered so well that she had stayed at the office late in order to get it typed in time to catch the outgoing mail, and she could have sworn that it had been put in with the letters which were ready for the mail. Yet this morning she had found it among a pile of papers which she had not looked at during her employer's absence.

She felt that she would never be able to face Blaise Villiers and tell him of her mistake. He would never forgive her. He would brand her as brainless and incompetent, and she knew that his good opinion meant a great deal to her.

If only she could escape—get out of the office and never come back again!

She looked quickly around, then she sprang to her feet, one hand pressed against her heart.

Close beside her a bell sounded imperatively—the bell which summoned her to Blaise Villier's office.

As Eve opened the door and paused on the threshold, the man seated facing her at the big desk on the other side of the office did not look up from the letter he was reading.

She noted the strong, grim line of his jaw, the way his dark hair, just touched with gray at the temples, grew with a spring from the parting, and the straight, passionate mouth which contradicted the cool, half-cynical glance of the gray eyes; and in that moment she asked herself for the first time what the real Blaise Villiers was like, the man who was hidden behind that inscrutable mask which was all she knew.

As he finished reading and looked up he smiled—one of those rare smiles which transformed his whole face as though a light had suddenly been flashed behind it.

"Ah! Good morning, Miss Dallas," he said cordially.

"Good morning, Mr. Villiers," Eve replied, although her throat felt dry and she had difficulty in finding her voice.

"Here I am," he continued, "back again, and anxious to catch up on the work. Perhaps you will take down the most important of these replies and deal with the rest yourself."

He pointed to a pile of letters on the desk before him.

Eve seated herself at once, opening the shorthand book she carried, and he began to dictate.

As a rule, she never had the slightest difficulty in keeping up with him, but this morning her hand shook so that three times she was obliged to ask him to repeat what he had said.

He did so without any comment, but though he did not appear to look at her, he had already noticed her extreme pallor, and wondered what could have happened to upset her.

He had a habit while he was dictating of drawing straight lines on the pad of paper before him, but as he did it now the lines changed their contour, and before he knew what was happening, had formed into a girl's face —the face of the girl sitting opposite him, the rippling waves of her black hair making a frame for her red-lipped beauty.

It was the face which had haunted him ever since he left New York, and which, try as he would, he had not been able to forget.

He had never allowed any girl to play an important part in his life, clinging to his belief that love weakened the will to achieve in other directions. Now, without any warning, a new problem had come into his life, and for the first time in that life he found himself unwilling to face a fact.

He did not realize at first that he had stopped speaking, and then, straightening abruptly, he tore the top piece of paper from the pad before him and, crumpling it, dropped it into the waste-paper basket. His face was slightly flushed.

"I beg your pardon," he said swiftly. "I was thinking of something else. Will you read those last sentences over, Miss Dallas?"

As she was about to comply, he stopped her with a gesture.

"One moment, please—I meant to ask you something first. What about that agreement you sent Curtis, Paige, Ltd.?"

It had come at last—the question she had been dreading.

Eve's breath caught, and the color mounted in a scarlet flood from chin to brow, and then receded, leaving her paler than before. She closed her book deliberately and rose, walking toward the desk, pausing with one hand resting upon it.

As she met the surprised question in his gray eyes, her heart seemed to stand still before it went racing on, and her voice sounded miles away in her own ears.

"Mr. Villiers," she said, "I have something to tell you. I do not know —I dare not think what you will say to me."

"What are you talking about?" he demanded. "If you are trying to tell me something has gone wrong, Miss Dallas, please go straight to the point. I do not think you can have committed any very dreadful crime," he added, with another of his rare smiles.

Kindness of any sort was the last thing she had expected, and to her horror, she felt the tears rush to her eyes. He saw them, too, and perhaps because of the sudden inexplainable feeling the sight roused in him, every trace of softness was blotted from his tone and replaced by irritation as he commanded:

"Come, Miss Dallas, I am waiting."

Eve bit her lip.

"I know. I never sent that agreement."

"What?" He half rose. Then he dropped back into his chair. "I don't quite understand. Please explain."

She obeyed, standing with one slender hand clutching desperately her notebook and pencil. Eve never knew afterward how she managed to get through —for the awful part of it was that there was nothing to explain. She must have picked the envelope up with a pile of papers laid ready for filing on her desk —that was all.

As Blaise Villiers listened, his face was inscrutable, and when her low, stumbling voice died away, the silence remained unbroken for what seemed to Eve an eternity.

When he spoke his tone was quite casual, but there was an underlying ice-cold note of anger in it which made her shiver inwardly.

"I suppose you know," he said, "that you have not only cost the firm a great deal of money, but that as I personally made the arrangement with Curtis, Paige, I shall look like an absolute fool."

Eve raised her eyes imploringly to his.

"I am very sorry," she said. "If you could only know how I feel. If there was anything in the world I could do to make up to you for my stupidity, I would do it. But, of course"—she made a little hopeles gesture—"there is nothing."

Blaise Villiers turned abruptly away from her, and, walking to the window, stood staring out from under knitted

***"I suppose you know," he said, "that you have cost the firm a great deal of money."***

brows across the vista of roofs beyond. Still he saw that cream-skinned, red-lipped face framed in its helmet of black hair, and those tear-drenched, violet eyes.

He was furious with her. Business incompetency had never been a thing which he excused, and he was not going to excuse it now.

A man's secretary ought to be a competent machine, and apart from that, entirely unobtrusive. Whereas the thought of this girl stayed in his mind when she was not there. Suddenly he found himself imagining the office without her; not so much the office, perhaps, as the emptiness of every day without a glimpse of her.

His heart gave a queer throb.

Emptiness!

The word seemed to have been thrust into his mind, and it cut like a knife.

He turned slowly and looked across the room at her. She had sunk down into her chair again, and sat huddled there, her face buried in her hands.

As he looked at her, Blaise Villiers knew in one blinding flash the reason for the restlessness which had filled him during his absence, why he had suddenly begun to feel that there was something missing in his life.

He wanted this girl more than he had ever wanted anything else before in his life, and for him to want a thing had always meant for him to get it.

"Of course," he said, and his voice was hard and level, "you know that I shall no longer be able to keep you as my secretary?"

Eve dropped her hands from her face, nodding dumbly. After all, it was only what she had expected, and yet, deep down in her, resentment stirred.

He was hard! He was hard and cruel.

There had been nights and nights when she had remained after hours and he had worked her to the point of exhaustion. She had never grown slack, never grumbled. She had given more than ordinary efficiency to his business —she had given herself, and she had never realized how much until that moment.

She rose, and hardly knowing what she did, turned toward the door.

"Wait a moment," he requested. "I think you said just now that there was nothing that you would not do in order to compensate for your mistake?"

"Yes."

"Did you mean that, or was it just an empty statement?"

Eve flushed, biting her lip.

"I am not in the habit of making empty statements. If there is anything I could do——"

"There is."

She looked at him in eager amazement.

"Please tell me what it is, then."

There was an almost imperceptible pause. Then, in exactly the same tone, he said:

"You can marry me."

"What!" Eve's eyes widened. "If that is a joke——"

He laughed grimly.

"It is about the last subject on which I should joke. You asked me what you could do—you asserted that you were ready to do anything. I am giving you your chance."

"But I don't—love you," she stammered. "And marriage is——"

He shrugged his shoulders as she hesitated.

"I thought so."

His sneering assurance that she was trying to back out stung her beyond endurance, and she flung back her head, her eyes flashing.

"Very well," she told him. "If you really mean it, I will marry you."

His impulse was to sweep her into his arms, to kiss her lips, but as he saw the fear in her eyes his hands dropped to his side. In that moment he faced the first real defeat of his life in the knowledge that he could not demand the one thing he wanted from this girl—her love. The knowledge hurt, and he was not the sort of man who enjoyed suffering.

"Good!" he said curtly. "We will get the license at once then, and be married Friday morning. That will give us a chance to go to my place in the country for the week-end. I am afraid that a real honeymoon will have to be postponed for some other time." A real honeymoon!

Eve felt a choking sensation in her throat at the irony of that phrase.

How could there ever be a real honeymoon for her now?

Eve stood by the dressing table in her exquisitely furnished bedroom at Cranleigh Hall, Blaise Villiers's lovely country home, looking blindly into the long mirror which reflected her slender form clad in a nightdress of palest pink crêpe de Chine, over which the maid who had just gone out of the room had

slipped a negligee of rose-colored chiffon lined with silver brocade.

This was her wedding night. That morning she had kept the bargain she had made, and had married Blaise Villiers.

She raised her left hand, and the light burning above glinted on the platinum band of her wedding ring beneath the great square emerald which was her betrothal gift.

She felt that she hated the man who had taken her in exchange for the twenty thousand dollars which she had been the means of losing—hated him the more because during their brief engagement she had discovered for the first time how marvelously attractive he could be, and because merely to acknowledge his attraction humiliated her.

It never entered her head that Blaise Villiers loved her. Pride had forbidden him to tell her so while he believed that she disliked him. And so she believed that their marriage was just a cold-blooded bargain. But she had determined to go through with it at all costs. He should never again have the chance to sneer at her for wishing to break her word.

Eve told herself that she would never forgive him. He had taken from her the most precious thing she possessed —her freedom of choice. He had forced her to become his chattel—his property.

He had insisted that she should order heaps of expensive clothes, the sort of things the wife of Blaise Villiers should possess, and had paid for them himself, even though she had told him that it would be time enough for him to buy her clothes after she was married to him.

At last she was alone. The maid who was waiting on her had gone, bidding her good night, and now she could drop the mask which she had been obliged to wear all day.

She flung herself down into a big chair, and, leaning her head back on the cushions, closed her eyes with a sigh of utter weariness.

What a terrible day it had been—from the ordeal of her marriage, followed by the drive from the city, and luncheon on the way. Then the arrival, welcomed by all the servants, and the agony of dinner at a table decorated with red roses.

It was all hateful—hateful!

She sprang to her feet suddenly as a knock sounded on the communicating door which she knew led to her husband's room.

Earlier in the evening she had tried to lock that door, but found that the key was missing, and now sudden panic took hold of her. She stood there, her hands pressed against her heart, and when the knock was repeated, could find no voice to answer.

Then the door opened, and Blaise Villiers, a silk dressing gown covering his pajamas, came across the threshold, closing it behind him.

"I thought you were asleep," he began, and broke off, a strange light burning in his eyes as they rested upon her. "Eve!" he said, just above his breath.

If she had not been deafened by the panic within her, she would have recognized the longing in that word. She warded him off imploringly.

"Please," she begged. "Please don't touch me!"

But he captured her hands, holding them fast.

"Eve," he asked, and again there was that strange yearning in his voice, "why do you think I married you? Didn't you guess that it was because I loved you?"

She caught her breath, the color draining from her face.

"If you really loved me," she answered, "you couldn't have forced me to become your wife when you knew I had no love to give you. Oh, please let me go. I've married you! I've kept my bargain——"

Suddenly his eyes hardened, but behind that hardness the flame still burned. He drew her toward him roughly.

"Do you think that you have kept to your bargain?" he asked. "How? The agreement was—not only that you should go through a ceremony. You are my wife, and you belong to me!"

His arms closed about her. She tried to fight free, a sob catching her breath. She had once thought his eyes cold, now the fire of them seemed to scorch her very soul.

"Let me go," she begged. "I hate you—oh! I hate you!"

"But you are going to learn to love me," he murmured, his lips against hers.

With that kiss it seemed to Eve that something went from her, and her power of resistance snapped.

Eve stirred, opened her eyes, and lay for a moment gazing about the room, which was illuminated by the sunshine streaming through the curtains.

Then, in a flash, she remembered where she was, and she fell back on the pillows.

Presently she sat up, pushing the waves of hair back from her forehead, listening half unconsciously for some movement from the other room. None came, and after a few moments she felt for her watch on the table beside the bed, and gave a little gasp as she glanced at it and discovered the time.

It was after ten o'clock. She realized that her husband must have been up and out for some time.

She lay back on her pillows again as the door opened and a maid came in with a cup of coffee.

"Mr. Villiers told me not to disturb you before," the girl explained as she set the coffee down.

"Has Mr. Villiers had his breakfast?" inquired Eve, keeping her voice steady by an effort, and hoping the girl did not notice the added color which no effort of will would keep from her cheeks.

"Yes! More than an hour ago. He has gone for a ride," the maid announced. As she drew aside the curtains and turned back toward the bed she added: "Will madam ring when she wishes her bath to be drawn?"

"You can draw it in ten minutes, please," Eve replied.

As soon as she was alone again she slipped out of bed, and going to the open window, stood breathing in long drafts of the warm, fragrant air, and gazing down at the rose garden below, where the trees were loaded with blossoms of every conceivable hue whose perfume floated up to her like incense.

Roses—the flowers of love!

She asked herself half angrily what she had in common with the emotion which those flowers symbolized.

Then she found herself remembering those first moments when Blaise Villiers had held her in his arms, she heard again the passionate thrill of his voice when he had told her that he had married her because he loved her.

She had believed that he lied, and yet this morning, in the clear light of the sun, she wondered if she had been wrong. The next minute she was telling herself angrily that she was mad to let herself soften toward him. No man who knew the true meaning of love could behave as he had done.

As she passed the dressing table she caught sight of her face in the mirror and paused involuntarily.

Was that really the same girl who had gone through that ceremony of marriage with Blaise Villiers yesterday?

It seemed years ago since they stood before the minister, and she felt as though the Eve Dallas who had signed her name for the last time then was an utterly different person from the one whose reflected eyes looked back into hers.

And she was a different person! She pressed her hands to her cheeks—she could never be the same again; she had

left her girlhood behind her, something had died, something had been born in her.

Curiously enough she no longer felt that she hated the man she had married, though she could not define her feeling for him. It did not seem any use hating him now—they had to spend their lives together; she was his wife, and nothing could ever free her again.

As she drank her coffee, sitting on the edge of the bed, she glanced about her appreciatively.

The room was exquisite in the summer sunlight. The floor was covered with a fitted carpet of pale rose-pink; the furniture, which was very modern in design, was hand painted in sweet-pea mauve with tiny wreaths of silver roses upon it; a mauve satin coverlet embroidered in rose and silver covered the bed, and the curtains and upholstery were of mauve brocade faintly shot with pink.

On the dressing table lay a set of pink enamel-and-silver gilt, each piece bearing the monogram "E. V."

It was obvious that the whole room and the dainty boudoir leading off it had been specially prepared for her with that speed and perfection which only unlimited money can bring about, and no girl could have wished for a more perfect setting.

Since her promise to marry him, Eve had never once thought of the riches and position she would enjoy as Blaise Villiers's wife, and yet all her life she had longed for just such surroundings as these, longed to have money and leisure and the beautiful things of life.

She could not help thinking how happy she might be if only things were different. Once again resentment burned in her against the man who she believed had forced her to become his wife with no other motive than to satisfy his arrogant demand that she should pay him in full for the mistake she had made.

When she had bathed and dressed a new shyness took hold of her, a dread of going downstairs, of facing her husband. She delayed as long as she possibly could, and then, feeling the maid's curious eyes upon her, made her way out of the room and down the broad oak staircase into the square hall below.

The great front doors stood wide open, and the sunshine flooded in through them. Eve paused, unconscious of the lovely picture she made in her yellow linen dress, her hair like a helmet of jet framing the creamy pallor of her face, her red mouth drooping tragically.

Seeing her, the man who came through the open door of the library paused involuntarily, his breath catching, a dark flush staining his cheeks.

The loveliness of her was like a flame in his blood. He wanted to go to her and take her in his arms and hold her close, to tell her that he loved her.

But he was determined that she should not guess what he was feeling, and she should never have cause to complain of his conduct again.

He moved forward, his clenched hands in the pockets of his tweed jacket, and because of the hold he was keeping on himself, his voice sounded hard and almost flippant as he greeted her.

"Good morning. I hope you slept well."

She started and turned her head to find him standing almost beside her. Ever since she woke she had dreaded this encounter. All the time she was dressing she had wondered how they would meet.

But she had not expected it to be with the cool, conventional greeting of one who might have been almost a stranger to her.

As she met his smiling eyes she missed the flame and pain behind them, and in their cool scrutiny read only mockery, but little guessed that if it was there it was for himself alone.

A scarlet tide of color surged into her face and receded, leaving her deathly pale, the violet of her eyes deepened almost to black.

"Good morning," she answered, keeping her voice cool and steady by a great effort. "I slept very well, thank you."

"Have you breakfasted?" he inquired. "Or shall I ask them to bring you something out on the terrace?"

Eve hesitated. She would have liked to say that she did not want any breakfast, that she had had coffee, but since he appeared to be so absolutely indifferent, she did not wish him to think that she was anything else. So she

***Eve little guessed that he was poignantly aware of every movement she made, that his pulses were beating wildly because of her nearness.***

thanked him, and while he rang and gave the order, went outside.

The terrace ran the full length of one side of the house, the library and drawing-room windows opening onto it. Roses and clematis entwined the stone balustrade in a riot of loveliness, and just below the gardens stretched until they merged into the lawns below.

As she seated herself in one of the cane chairs, Eve was blind to the beauty of her surroundings. Her heart was throbbing heavily, and a load of shame and misery seemed to be bearing her down.

In a few moments the man who was her husband joined her. He carried several newspapers under his arm, and seating himself beside her with a casual remark about the beauty of the morning, began to unfold and glance through them.

Her breakfast was brought out, and a small, square table laid for her. She tried to force herself to eat, but it was a farce, and yet she was furiously angry with herself because the casual manner of the man she had married possessed such power to humiliate her.

Eve little guessed that behind the rustling pages of his newspapers he was poignantly aware of every movement she made, that his pulses were beating wildly because of her nearness, and he was fighting for self-control as he had never fought in all his life before.

As last she felt that she could not bear the silence any longer. She would go mad if she remained. Rising abruptly, she turned toward the house with a murmured excuse.

She passed blindly through one of the long, open windows of the library, and she had got halfway across the room when she heard her husband's voice behind her:

"Eve!"

"Yes?" she queried without turning, for she knew that the tears were perilously near her eyes, and she felt that she would rather die if he were to guess the depth of her misery.

He hesitated, his eyes on the back of her bent head.

Almost unconsciously, he noticed how white the nape of her neck was against the intense blackness of her hair, which clustered in little curls just in the hollow, and he was filled with a wild desire to press his lips to that spot. If he had obeyed that impulse, if he had taken her in his arms and poured out all the pent-up longing of his heart, it would have been impossible for her to doubt any longer that he loved her, as a man only loves once in a lifetime.

But he was afraid—afraid lest her scorn should madden him afresh; and his voice was rather cold when he spoke again.

"I owe you an apology," he said. "I confess that I have behaved like a cad, but you will not have to complain of me again."

That was all. Eve could make no reply—she did not know why it should be so, but she felt that somehow his apology made things ten times worse. It took the last shadow of excuse out of his conduct, because if he had really loved her, she knew in that moment that she could have forgiven him.

If he had loved her he would have told her so.

She was in no mood to be logical. She was torn by a suffering which she could not understand, but she told herself that she hated Blaise Villiers as she had never thought it possible to hate any one, and if ever the chance came she would make him pay.

In the days that followed, Eve continued to tell herself that she hated the man she had married.

They spent all the week in his apartment overlooking the park, and at weekends went into the country, unless they happened to be visiting some of his friends. Wherever they were, they did

a great deal of entertaining. Blaise Villiers knew every one who was worth knowing in society, and Eve found that, as his wife, she was courted and petted in a way which would have made many girls quite happy.

She played her part perfectly, slipping into her new life as though she had been born to it. Pride helped her, for she was determined that Blaise Villiers's friends should never have the chance to sneer at her. Besides, she was thankful for the social activities which helped to fill her empty life.

But though she turned a smiling face to the world, her heart was breaking with its load of misery, and though in public she and her husband seemed a most devoted couple, they lived as absolute strangers.

One golden July morning Eve sat at breakfast in her boudoir in the New York apartment. She had been to a dance the night before, and had not returned until the small hours. Her husband had not accompanied her; he had been at a business dinner, and so she had not seen him since yesterday afternoon.

Whether she saw him or not, she was never free from the memory of him. In spite of her burning resentment, in spite of the fact that she told herself she hated him, Blaise Villiers had come to fill the whole horizon of her life, and she felt that if she could not escape from him she would go mad.

Their life together was impossible. Although he always treated her with the most scrupulous courtesy, they might have been utter strangers. In the days when she had been his secretary he had been more friendly than he ever was now that she was his wife.

This morning it had suddenly come to her that her life was unbearable. She could not go on like this; it was making her ill.

Eve was superbly healthy. She could not remember ever having been really ill in her life, but just lately she had begun to feel terribly tired, as though everything were an effort. She told herself that it was the late nights, the rush of her life, the constant strain of having to show a happy face to the world. She felt she had come to the end of her rope. She could not, she would not, go on.

She looked up in surprise as there was a knock on the door and in answer to her "Come in," her husband entered.

The last two months had laid their mark on him also. There were deep-drawn lines running from his nose to the corners of his mouth, and the thick, dark hair at his temples showed streaks of silver.

Eve did not connect the change in him with herself. It only seemed to her that he was colder and sterner than before, and, intent on her own misery, she did not seek for the cause of the change in him.

"I did not go to the office this morning," he told her. "Are you in any particular hurry? I want to speak to you."

"I am in no hurry at all," she replied coldly, wondering angrily why her heart should always beat so quickly whenever this man came near her.

"Good," he nodded. "I have a list of names here—people to whom I want you to send invitations to spend a few days—in some cases longer—at Cranleigh. I have decided that from the beginning of next month we will give a series of house parties down there."

As he spoke he laid the paper on the table beside her, and, moving over to the window, glanced down into the street below.

Although Blaise had avoided looking at her, he carried the picture she made, in her negligee of pale-pink satin and tiny mules to match, very clearly in his mind.

He had once dreamed of seeing her every morning at the breakfast table in the exquisite intimacy of just such

clothes. He pushed the thought aside impatiently. What was the use of remembering dreams which he had shattered?

Eve picked up the list mechanically, but as she glanced over it all the concentrated resentment within her suddenly flamed up. She rose to her feet, and as he turned, their eyes met, and he felt his heart miss a beat.

"Listen to me, please," she demanded, her words tumbling over each other in her eager determination to get them out. "I want you to understand that I cannot go on any longer. I——"

"Wait!" he requested. "Let me understand your meaning clearly while you are about it. You mean?"

"That this marriage of ours must end," she retorted passionately. "I won't go on. Our life together is impossible. You must give me my freedom."

He turned toward the door, shrugging his shoulders slightly.

"My dear Eve, you are evidently tired and overwrought. Next week you will be able to leave New York, and a rest in the country should do you good. If there is anybody whose name you think ought to be added to that list, please add it."

Without giving her a chance to say any more, he went out, shutting the door behind him.

For a moment Eve stood looking after him, her hands clenched. The calm way in which he had ignored her passionate demand for freedom infuriated her.

He did not care how she felt, how impossible life had become for her, she told herself bitterly. He thought that just because he had married her he had the right to own her. She was a part of his house and furniture!

If she could only hurt him, make him suffer, drag his pride in the dust as he had dragged hers!

She little dreamed that in his study Blaise Villiers was sitting staring in front of him with tortured eyes, knowing for the first time in his life what real fear meant—the fear of a girl's will proving stronger than his own.

Suppose Eve should really make up her mind to leave him?

He knew that nothing he could say or do would prevent her from going, and without her, life would never have any more meaning for him.

Eve was roused by the entrance of her maid carrying half a dozen letters which had arrived by the last mail.

She placed them on a table by Eve's side, and, pausing to remind her that she had a luncheon appointment, went into the bedroom.

After a moment Eve picked up the letters, glancing at them disinterestedly and tossing them aside until she came to the last one, which she saw had been readdressed from the house where she had roomed before her marriage. As she recognized the handwriting on the envelope, she flushed with surprise and pleasure. The letter inside was dated more than a month before.

My Dear Eve: I am back again in New York, and wanting very badly to see you.

Of course I have read of your marriage. My dear, I wish you all the happiness that I once hoped I should be able to give you—and all that you deserve. I have lots of news for you—if you are interested enough to want to hear it. Am staying at the old address until the middle of July, when I shall be going abroad again. Drop me a line there if I may see you.

I want you to understand that nothing can ever change my feeling for you, and to know that I could be of service to you would make me the happinest man alive.

As always,

Vincent.

There was a mist before her eyes as she put the letter down.

It was three years since she had seen Vincent Strange. He had been the manager of the firm where she had been employed before she went to work for Blaise Villiers, and he had given up the job to take a much better one abroad.

Before he went he had told her that he loved her, and asked her to marry him. Although she liked him as a friend, she knew that she could never love him enough to marry him. He had told her that he would always love her, and that if ever she needed a friend he would come to her from the other end of the world.

Now he was in New York again—the man who loved her, the man to whom she knew she meant the whole world.

As she looked down at the letter in her hand a strange expression came into her eyes.

A few months ago she had been longing for some way to free herself from Blaise Villiers—a way in which she could hurt him as he had hurt and humiliated her.

And now—— Her breath caught. Was this the way that Fate offered?

She raised her eyes, glancing at the calendar which stood on the desk at the other side of the room.

Vincent Strange, the man who loved her, and who would give his life to make her happy, would be leaving New York soon. Why should she not ask him to take her with him?

Eve changed the bag she carried from one hand to the other and paused.

She felt again that tiredness of which she had so often been aware just lately, but she cheered herself with the memory that in a few minutes she would reach the end of her journey—in a few minutes she would be able to ease her aching heart by telling the one man whom she could trust all her troubles.

Looking back afterward, she knew that it was sheer madness which had filled her heart since the moment when she had made up her mind to leave Blaise Villiers and go to Vincent Strange.

She had kept her luncheon appointment, and had gone to a matinée. Returning to the apartment afterward, she excused herself from keeping her evening engagement on the plea of feeling ill, so that her husband had been obliged to go out to dinner without her. Then she dismissed her maid for the night, and set about her preparations for departure.

Before she left she had written a note to her husband which she had put in his study. In it she had told him that she was leaving him and was going away with a man who had always loved her, and that she hoped he would divorce her.

Although she did not love Vincent Strange, and she intended to ask his help in the name of friendship to escape from her present life, she meant Blaise Villiers to believe differently because she wanted to hurt his pride by forcing him to drag his name through the divorce court.

No one had seen her leave the house, and now she was walking along the block in which Vincent Strange roomed.

The street was badly lighted, but she knew the way, for she had often had tea with him in the old days, and reaching the house, she went up the steps.

In answer to her ring, a trim maid came to the door.

"Is Mr. Strange in?" Eve asked.

"No, miss," the girl answered. "He went away yesterday. He had a cable, and had to leave right away. Would you like to see Mrs. Simmons?"

But Mrs. Simmons, the landlady, knew Eve, and she was the last person she wanted to face now. Eve shook her head.

"It really doesn't matter. I'm sorry to have missed him," she said as she picked up her bag and hurried away.

Out in the street again she almost ran. Her brainstorm which had driven her to leave her husband's house seemed suddenly to have subsided, and she was able to think, to recognize the madness of her action with terrible clearness.

She must have been insane, she told herself, not to have let Vincent Strange know what she intended doing.

Now, for the first time, she realized that she ought to have consulted him. By that note which she had written to Blaise she had put both him and herself in a false position.

Eve was hurrying blindly along when suddenly she stopped with a little gasp, and, dropping her bag, pressed her hands over her heart.

The next moment she swayed and would have fallen had it not been for a man who had just got out of a car by the curb and was crossing the street.

Reaching her side at a stride, he flung an arm about her.

"You are ill!" he exclaimed kindly. "Don't be afraid. Let me take you inside. I am a doctor."

It was just midnight when, with a hand which trembled, Eve slipped her latchkey into the door of Blaise Vil-

***"Go!" he commanded. "I never want to see you again!" Turning away from her, not daring to trust himself further, he strode out of the room.***

liers's apartment and, turning it softly, reëntered the home which she had expected never to see again.

As long as she lived she knew she would never forget the last two hours. Since those moments when she had sat facing the doctor in his consulting room, a whole eternity seemed to have passed.

Her one thought had been to get back here, to destroy the note which she had left in her husband's study before he could read it.

She thrust her bag hurriedly under the table in the hall, and, crossing the floor, traversed the short passage leading to her husband's study.

Outside the door, she paused, listening.

There was no sound, and with a breath of relief, she concluded that the room was empty. Turning the handle softly, she entered, and then stood still with a gasp of terror.

A single light was burning—that of the reading lamp on the desk—and seated beside it, an open letter in his hand, was Blaise Villiers .

One glance told her that the envelope she had placed on the mantelpiece was gone, and as he rose to face her, she felt her heart stand still and then go jerking on in sheer terror.

"Blaise," she moved toward him, her hands outstretched.

He was curiously pale, and in that pallor his eyes burned like blue flames.

"So you came back! May I ask the reason? Or shall I guess? Your sweetheart was perhaps not quite so ready to receive you as you thought he would be."

"Blaise!" she cried sharply. "I haven't any sweetheart. Please let me explain."

"Why waste your time and mine?" he asked. "Your note explains all I want to know."

"But don't you see? It is a terrible mistake." She was almost beside herself with fear. "You must listen——"

"Whatever you have to say can be said elsewhere," he answered.

"What do you mean?" she cried.

"My lawyer will communicate with you in good time, and since it is important that nothing should interfere with my decision to divorce you, I must request you to leave my house at once."

"Divorce!" Her white lips formed the words, and she caught at the back of a chair to steady herself. "You can't divorce me!" she cried. "You—can't!"

He laughed again, but this time there was pain mingled with bitterness.

"I should have agreed with you once, but even my patience can be driven too far. Listen to me," he commanded sternly. "We have been married for two months. Since our wedding night every hour has been hell to me. I've tried to be decent, to give you your chance—to make up for my behavior. I was ashamed of myself! I had begun to believe that I was not fit to touch the hem of your dress. I loved you—worshiped you. Now I find that while for your sake I have been content to live as a stranger to you, so that I might know that you were near me—you are in love with another man."

"It isn't true!" Eve cried.

"Does a girl confess such a thing when it is not true?" he asked, tapping the letter in his hand.

In that moment she knew the full extent of her folly, knew that she would never be able to make him believe in her again.

With a little moan she flung herself on her knees at his feet.

"Forgive me," she begged. "Only let me tell you everything."

He stooped and raised her roughly, and with his hands upon her, felt his pulses leap with the old mad longing. Looking down into her tear-filled eyes, it was all he could do to prevent himself from taking her in his arms and telling her that nothing else mattered so long as she had come back to him.

But the red mists of jealousy which had closed down on him when he read her letter were still there. Otherwise he would surely have seen the look in her eyes which he had never seen there before.

The thought that she had given her love to another man drove him nearly frantic, and with a strangled sound he thrust her from him.

"Go!" he commanded. "I never want to see you again!"

Turning away from her, not daring to trust himself further, he strode out of the room.

With a cry of despair, Eve ran after him, but as she reached the door it shut in her face, and she was alone with her unspoken secret.

She knew that her heart was breaking, for at last knowledge had come to her—the knowledge to which she had shut her eyes deliberately during these last months.

She loved Blaise Villiers. She had always loved him—and she had killed his love for her by her own folly.

He had told her that he never wished to see her again. It was she who had made him believe her unworthy of his love.

And she was to be the mother of his child.

Leaving the house, Eve went to a small hotel in the neighborhood, and the next day, when she was able to face things a little more calmly, she saw that for the sake of the child that was coming she must make one last effort to induce her husband to believe in her innocence, and so she sat down and wrote to him, telling him everything.

She waited vainly for a reply for some days. Meanwhile she had been obliged to send for some of her things, as she had practicaliy nothing with her.

One morning came a letter from her husband's lawyer, inclosing the one she had written to him, unopened, and requesting that all future communications should be made through them, as he was instituting proceedings for divorce against her.

She wrote at once to Vincent Strange, telling him everything, confessing the full extent of her folly, keeping nothing back. She knew that in spite of the position in which she had put him, he would understand, but the more she thought about it the more ashamed she was of what she had done.

Before her marriage she had saved nearly five hundred dollars, and this was still intact, so that she knew she would have enough to see her through. But meanwhile, to stay in New York, where she might at any moment meet people she knew, was unbearable, and so she decided to go into the suburbs.

She rented a tiny cottage in Bayview and advertised for typewriting. Quite a lot came her way, so that she was busy most of the day.

It was the nights that were the most unbearable, when she lay staring wide-eyed into the darkness for hour after hour, and only slept to dream of the man she loved and wake with a sense of utter loss.

To Blaise Villiers life had become unbearable. All his success, all his money, counted as nothing. He had failed in the one thing that really mattered, and he suffered as only strong natures are capable of suffering.

His belief that Eve had given to another the love which he had failed to win drove him to the verge of madness, and yet, in spite of that belief, he knew that he still loved her, and would love her as long as he lived.

None of their friends knew of the impending divorce. They merely thought that Eve had had a breakdown in health and been obliged to go away. He was doing no entertaining. Every week-end he went out to the country and shut himself up in the house which held such poignant memories.

One Saturday afternoon he was driv-

ing himself down, traveling with a recklessness which had become habitual with him, when he narrowly missed colliding with a car which was coming out of a gateway. In swerving to avoid it, his own car skidded and crashed into a fence.

He was not hurt, and a moment later was standing surveying a bent fender and cracked windshield with rueful anger.

The driver of the other car alighted, and coming across, asked what he thought he was trying to do. Then, as the other man turned, both his expression and that of the stranger changed.

"Blaise Villiers!"

"Harvey Courtney!"

The man addressed as Courtney wrung Blaise Villiers's hand.

"I'm delighted to see you, old man," he exclaimed. "Of course you got the message I sent you by your wife about three months ago? Wasn't it the oddest thing that I should encounter her like that, and that of all the many doctors in New York I should be the one to help her that night. How is she?"

Blaise Villiers stared at the doctor in wonderment.

"My wife never mentioned having met you," he said.

The other looked surprised.

"Really. As a matter of fact, I asked her to telephone and let me know how she got on. It was quite by chance I discovered who she was."

He laughed.

"I'm afraid I gave her a bit of a shock when I explained exactly what was wrong—or rather right with her. I suppose it was good news to you, and you are looking forward to the happy event."

"Look here"—Blaise Villiers caught the arm of the man who had been his college chum—"I wish you would explain what you are driving at," he begged. "My wife and I are not on the best of terms just now, and I did not know that you had met her, or that she was ill. What is the matter with her? I have a right to know."

For a second the other hesitated.

"Yes, you certainly have a right to know," he said slowly. "But we cannot talk here. You had better come up to the house with me."

Eve removed the manuscript which she had just finished typing from her machine, and laid it on the pile beside her with a little sigh.

She wondered how she would ever go on bearing her misery. She was not really a coward, and again and again she had told herself that she ought to try to remember that in a few more months there would be something for her to live for. But Eve was not the sort of girl whose life can be filled by a child. The child of the man she loved might mean a great deal to her, but without the man her life would never be complete.

She wanted him with a yearning that grew with every passing day, but she believed that she no longer meant anything to him, and her heart was breaking.

A sob broke from her, and she covered her face with her hands.

"Blaise—oh, Blaise!"

Her whole being seemed to go out in that name, and, intent on her heart hunger, she did not hear a step on the porch or know that for a moment a shadow darkened the window.

It was only when the door opened that she turned and confronted the man who stood there gazing at her across the narrow space.

"Blaise!" She spoke his name just above her breath.

"Eve, my darling." He reached her side, but he did not touch her. "I have come to ask—to beg you to forgive me. I know everything. Three days ago I met Doctor Courtney—he was the man who looked after you that night when

you nearly fainted outside his house—the night when you went to see Vincent Strange and found that he was gone."

Her breath caught. "You know that?"

He nodded.

"Senseless fool that I am! If only I had read the letter that you sent me! Courtney partly opened my eyes, and at Cranleigh I received a letter from my lawyers. When the divorce papers were served on Strange he wrote and told them the whole truth, and he sent the letter which you had written him. He wrote to me, too. He told me it was only for your sake he told the truth. Otherwise he would have gladly taken the chance I gave him. I was mad not to listen to you when you came back, but I was half beside myself with jealousy. Eve, will you forgive me? Will you come back to me?"

"There is nothing to forgive," Eve answered wearily. "It was my fault. I ought never to have led you to believe what I did. You are only asking me to return to you for the sake of——"

"For my own sake," he answered. "For the love of Heaven, let us understand everything clearly. I love you! Without you life has no meaning for me."

A great light leaped into her eyes, her breath caught, and the color stained her cheeks.

"Is that true?" she asked.

As they faced each other, it seemed as though the last barrier was destroyed and they looked into each other's heart.

With an inarticulate sound he reached out and gathered her close.

"I love you," he said. "I love you."

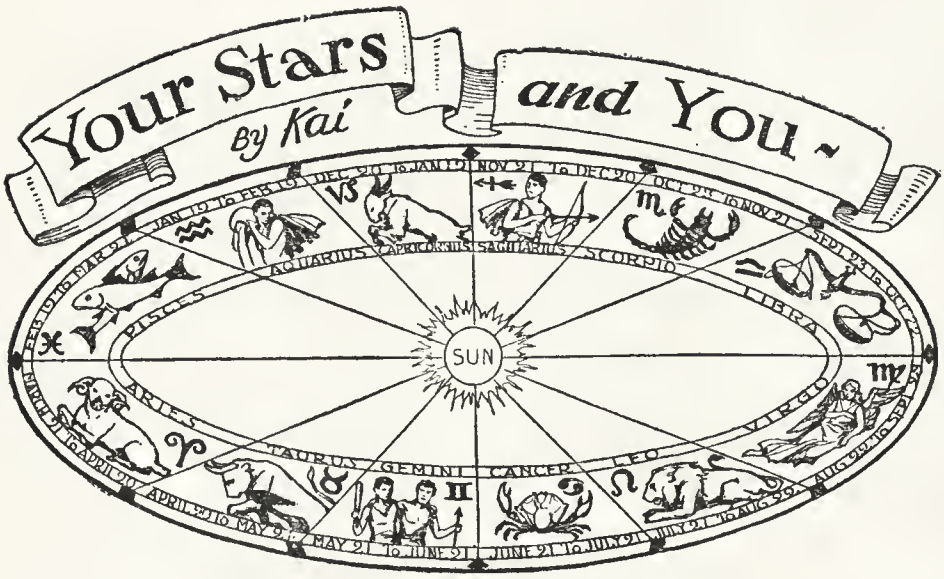
"And I love you, Blaise. I think I have always loved you," Eve answered.

His lips found hers, took them, and held them in a kiss which made her his for all time, but in the passion of that kiss there was something reverent, a new tenderness, a new ecstasy, because of the suffering they had both been through.

## HAVEN

I TRUDGE across the withered winter earth
Through snow knee-deep and, when I reach your door,
With a glad cry you lead me where strange mirth
Is lifting from the fire's crackling roar;
While red sparks lose them in the chimney gloom
And candles gleam amid the mantel brass,
Alone within the shadow-haunted room,
Lo, as we kiss and cling together, lass,
There is no weariness; there is no grief;
There are no gray ghosts walking with the years;
There is no anguish passing all belief;
There are no doubtings and no blinding tears;
Safe from the storm, far from the world's alarms,
I find rest and my dreams within your arms!

EDGAR DANIEL KRAMER.




## YOUR WEEK.

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time.

In view of the influences for the past several weeks, most of you who keep a sensitive ear attuned to the constructive, building side of life know we are on the up grade and are progressing in spite of the readjustments taking place at this period of our development.

The influences during the next seven days are mixed—both limiting and expansive. There is travel and social activity shown for some of you; a tightening and restraining of finances for others of you. Continue to make each day bring you returns for personal advancement. The keynote is progress; the warning is recognition of true values; the ideal is personal, inward growth; the goal is advancement.

## DAY BY DAY.

**Saturday, April 25th.**

♄

This is an intense day. Hasty words, excitement, and uncontrolled actions will lead to regrettable consequences, and it would be a good idea to keep a tight rein on the emotions. There are expansive and relaxing periods around two in the afternoon and near midnight, but you should watch your step early in the morning, at eight o'clock, after three o'clock in the afternoon, and at nine in the evening. Be careful of accident and use discretion generally, especially if you drive an automobile or if traveling.

**Sunday, April 26th.**

☉

This is a favorable day for travel and general activity. There is an expansive, comfortable feeling about affairs, blended with optimism and hope. Plan to attend lectures, concerts, and engage in interesting discussions. It is an excellent day for considering financial matters and for planning for the future. Make it an interesting and profitable day mentally. It is yours to do with as you will.

**Monday, April 27th.**

☽

Another good day, but irregular in thought and nebulous in its reactions. Keep your feet on the ground, but plan to enjoy yourself. Favorable for considering the inner thoughts and the side of your life that is hidden from the public gaze and for assisting those who need your encouragement and help. The morning hours are uncertain and vague; around three in the

afternoon is favorable for dealing with those in important positions, and the evening is most adaptable for social contacts and a pleasant time. To-day is ideal for clearing away the mental kinks that have been confusing you.

**Tuesday, April 28th.** ♂ To-day is good for contracts, agreements, clearing away old misunderstandings, for promoting money matters, for business and pleasure, for financial dealings, and for handling details. Around two in the afternoon the trend is erratic and impulsive, and is very stable around the dinner hour in the early evening.

**Wednesday, April 29th.** ☿ A good day for dealing with the opposite sex, except around noon. There will be uncertainty about your financial situation and consideration of values. Avoid legal matters and entanglements to-day. It is a favorable time, and the evening hours are aggressive; but do not over-expand your activities. The entire week is particularly good for writers and those of you whose existence embraces the use of words, spoken or written.

**Thursday, April 30th.** ♃ A good day for plans and alert thinking. Do not begin anything of importance to-day, and be cautious in handling financial affairs, dealing with professional people, and in land deals. Avoid extravagance, erratic action, and unstable thinking.

**Friday, May 1st.** ♀ This is a favorable day, with the morning hours better than in the afternoon, the pleasant periods being just after the lunch hour and in the early evening. Be careful of trickery, deception, contracts, and agreements to-day, and expect an intense evening that tends toward disappointments and quarrels.

## IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN——

### March 21st and April 20th
(Aries ♈)

—your life is presenting many complications, and you must keep a clear head when making important decisions. Do not wipe everything off the slate unless you are sure you have something to put in the place of the ideas you discard and the conditions of your life that you eliminate. Be smart and make your plans ahead before making a radical move. You folks born under the sign Aries who have the most difficult influences during the next seven days were born between April 4th and 9th and between April 13th and 16th. Very active and aggressive period for those born between March 29th and April 1st. You may expect a happier period that is favorable for social affairs, for dealing with women and with the opposite sex, if your birthday falls between March 22nd and 29th.

### April 20th and May 21st
(Taurus ♉)

—this is a mixed period for most of you, but most active and generally pleasant and profitable. The next seven days are active and filled with annoyances if your birthday occurs around May 1st, but there is a pleasant undertone to all your affairs. Expect progress, emotional interests, and improvement in your financial status if born between April 22nd and 26th, between May 5th and 10th, and deal with older people, clear away old conditions that have been standing for weeks in the past, and put your affairs in a sound practical condition if born between May 13th and 16th.

### May 21st and June 21st
(Gemini ♊)

—this period is neutral for folks born the middle of June, but brings developments and progress for the rest of you Geminians. If your birthday falls around May 25th, keep your mental condition as stable as possible; do not fool yourself about actual conditions, and use your analytical qualities to look at both sides of every issue. A most opportune time for you who have birthdays between June 5th and 9th, and favorable for action and for dealing with the opposite sex if born between May 22nd and June 3rd.

**June 21st and July 21st**
(Cancer ♋)

—you are in the cross-opposition group and must consider the proper angle to your affairs and not let emotion influence your good common sense and reasoning powers. It is a difficult time from a financial and emotional standpoint for you who have birthdays between July 6th and 10th, and you should view life as calmly and rationally as possible. Active, aggressive, and progressive for you who have birthdays between July 1st and 4th. Emotionally pleasant and beneficial socially if your birthday occurs between June 21st and 29th. Do not allow yourselves to give in to existing conditions. This is just a cycle of unpleasantness for most of you Cancerians, and while you are probably miserable over many things, you know that no condition is permanent in this changing world of ours.

**July 21st and August 22nd**
(Leo ♌)

—this is an active and interesting interlude in your life, and you are on the way to real developments and better conditions. If everything has been topsy-turvy during the past few months, forget it and plan for the coming summer months and results in the future from your concerted efforts. Expect some turmoil and mental upheaval if born between August 1st and 5th; emotional reactions and social participation if born between July 24th and 30th; new opportunities, business advancement, financial progress, and new methods of procedure if born between August 6th and 11th. Make this period of your life aggressive and remunerative.

**August 22nd and September 23rd**
(Virgo ♍)

—you will benefit through the efforts of others and learn through analyzing conditions and studying the effects of experiences on your fellow man. You Virgo people, Geminians, Aquarians, and the Scorpio folks always profit through contact with those who touch your lives, and it is a very good idea to blend your observations with conditions that surround you. It is a favorable time for this group, and the people born between the dates mentioned below will have specific developments during the next seven days. For those born between September 15th and 19th it is a stable and constructive period; between September 1st and 6th it is an active and progressive time, and you should make every day count for your progress and advancement. For those born around August 27th it is inspirational and emotional; between September 7th and 10th it is expansive, pleasant, and profitable, and a time when you should take note of your opportunities and use your contacts for your personal gain.

**September 23rd and October 22nd**
(Libra ♎)

—you are in the groupings of people who must exert patience, forbearance, and mental balance. The next seven days are a great improvement over the past several months if born between September 26th and October 3rd, and you may look to the immediate future with hope, blended with your calm and cool judgment. If born between October 6th and 12th, you may expect financial unpleasantness, unfavorable developments in affairs of associations, partnerships, and marital conditions. If born between October 15th and 18th, I suggest an understanding of the conflicts of this period and a determination to withstand the pressure of the present days, with the knowledge that the time is coming when this restriction will be erased. It will not help you Librans to grow impatient with the set of conditions prevalent in your lives just now, and you might balance both sides of the ledger and put the responsibility of your present condition in its proper column.

**October 22nd and November 21st**
(Scorpio ♏)

—you are in a group that is finding things to your liking just now. Superficial reactions do not matter to you children of Scorpio, and many of you have been adjusting yourselves to life since you suffered so disastrously between the middle of 1924 and the end of 1926. As you know, there are two sides to the Scorpio nature—the people who soar into the realms of spiritual understanding and are aware of the ultimate perspective upon life—yet cognizant of the groundwork of the scheme and conscious of the fixedness and stability that is necessary in contacting your fellow man. The other side of the people of Scorpio are they who remain close to the sordid and unprogressive side of life that is limiting in its returns. This sign of the zodiac needs its determined spirit and its fixedness of purpose, but must guard against stubbornness and against being its

own worst enemy. To you who have profited by experience, there is stability, gain, and advancement in store for you, and during the next seven days the folks who will benefit are those who were born between November 6th and 9th, between November 14th and 18th, and any one born around October 27th. Keep your sarcastic streak under cover and your irritation and temper under control if born between October 31st and November 5th. All of you born under this sign should capitalize your assets and view life from the proper angles during this period of your existence. It is a favorable time for you.

**November 21st and December 20th**
(Sagittarius ♐)

—this next week is not particularly important for you, but your life will be active and the trend of your affairs will have a bearing upon the future. Do not take on more than you can handle without strain if born between Novemher 24th and 29th, and do not let emotion and attraction for the opposite sex govern your life entirely if your birthday falls between the dates mentioned above. Good for business and general advancement if born between December 1st and 4th, and a summing-up period and a settling of affairs is in line for you born between December 15th and 18th.

**December 20th and January 19th**
(Capricorn ♑)

—you cannot expect a complete readjustment of your existence at this time, but you may look upon the developments of this period as having a permanent effect upon your character and general scheme of thought. Understand that you are at a crisis in your life and view all happenings as important, but avoid pessimism and morbidness. A feeling of futility will not be advantageous in helping you solve your problems. If everything is all wrong, be patient—especially you who were born between January 12th and 16th and from January 3rd to 9th. Expect activity and a better frame of mind if born around January 1st and during the last days in the month of December.

**January 19th and February 19th**
(Aquarius ♒)

—this is not an important period for you, but each day will carry developments that are a part of the plan for the future. Your personal influences are more important at this time than these general remarks about you, but there is stability and satisfactory adjustments in the lives of you born between February 11th and 15th, and a happy frame of mind for those who have birthdays between January 22nd and 28th. This latter group may also derive pleasure from contacts with individuals connected with the daily routine and may enjoy the opposite sex and social activity. It is an irritating and annoying time for you born between January 28th and February 2nd, and you should not act rashly, make mistakes caused through hasty judgments that will react upon you later, or go off the loose end of the general trend of your affairs.

**February 19th and March 21st**
(Pisces ♓)

—you have very little to worry about and should make the next few weeks advantageous to your interests. Constructive and progressive for you who celebrate your birthdays between March 13th and 16th and between March 4th and 10th. Build up the scheme of your existence for future accomplishment and expand in your personal activities and in business if born between February 27th and March 4th. A confused state of mind is in store for those who have birthdays around February 23rd, and these folks should prick the bubbles at this time and not be fooled by promises and expectations.

## CHART FOR OPERATIONS.

**May, 1931.**

Eastern standard time.

May 1st.—Moon in Scorpio at six twenty-six a. m.; avoid operations on appendix and regenerative organs.

May 2nd.—Moon in Scorpio all day; see above.

May 3rd.—Moon in Sagittarius at seven fourteen a. m.; a dual sign; avoid all operations, especially those of hips, bowels, and for feverish conditions; operation will have to be repeated.

May 4th.—Moon in Sagittarius all day; see above.

May 5th.—Moon in Sagittarius until twelve thirty-seven p. m.; see above. Then in Capricorn; see May 6th.

May 6th.—Moon in Capricorn all day; favorable for all operations, if necessary.

May 7th.—Moon in Capricorn until eight thirty-seven p. m.; see above. After that, in Aquarius; see May 8th.

May 8th.—Moon in Aquarius all day;

good for all operations, if necessary, except those for gravel, stone, or blood.

May 9th.—Moon in Aquarius; see above.

May 10th.—Moon in Pisces at eight two a. m.; see May 11th.

May 11th.—Moon in Pisces all day; a dual sign; avoid all operations, especially foot and regenerative organs; operation would have to be repeated.

May 12th.—Moon in Pisces until nine p. m.; see above. After that, in Aries, see May 13th.

May 13th.—Moon in Aries all day; avoid head, ear, nose, and brain operations.

May 14th.—Moon in Aries all day; see above.

May 15th.—Moon in Taurus at eight fifty-four a. m.; see May 16th.

May 16th.—Moon in Taurus all day; avoid throat, ear, nose, and neck operations.

May 17th.—Moon in Taurus until six twenty-six p. m.; see above. After that, in Gemini; see May 18th.

May 18th.—Moon in Gemini all day; a dual sign; operation would have to be repeated. This sign rules arms, hands, and lungs. Avoid all operations.

May 19th.—Moon in Gemini until midnight. After that, in Cancer; see May 20th.

May 20th.—Moon in Cancer all day; avoid operations on stomach and breasts.

May 21st.—Moon in Cancer all day; see above.

May 22nd.—Moon in Leo at six twenty-seven a. m.; see May 23rd.

May 23rd.—Moon in Leo all day; avoid heart, back, and blood operations.

May 24th.—Moon in Leo until ten seven a. m.; see above. After that, in Virgo; see May 25th.

May 25th.—Moon in Virgo all day; a dual sign; avoid all operations, especially for nervous or intestinal disorders. An operation to-day would have to be repeated.

May 26th.—Moon in Virgo until one p. m.; see above. After that, in Libra; see May 27th.

May 27th.—Moon in Libra all day; avoid kidney, stone, and gravel operations.

May 28th.—Moon in Libra until three eight p. m.; see above. After that, in Scorpio; see May 29th.

May 29th.—Moon in Scorpio all day; avoid operations on appendix and regenerative organs.

May 30th.—Moon in Scorpio until five forty-eight p. m.; see above. Then in Sagittarius; see May 31st.

May 31st.—Moon in Sagittarius all day; a dual sign; avoid all operations, especially those of hips, bowels, and for feverish conditions; operation would have to be repeated.

## THE STAR QUESTION BOX

Thanks very much, Mr. C. J. W., for your letter and for your chart. I do not know how long you have been studying astrology, and you write that you are a "beginner," but I like the businesslike way you have approached the subject and the obvious thoroughness of the work you have done up to this time. As you have ascertained, most likely, your data of January 28, 1898, eight twenty p. m., in Nebraska, gives you qualities that point to a successful study of astrology. You have a perception of details, a vision into the requirements of the future, an adaptability to scientific processes, persistence and zest for research material, an alert mentality, and a steadiness in following up knowledge acquired. I suggest you become an associate member of the Astrological Guild so that you may receive the monthly bulletin, which contains valuable information and research data that will be interesting and helpful and which will keep you in touch with the developments in the astrological world. I see no reason why you will not make strides in continuing your studies further. Your sincerity and determination to make astrology your life work are in line with the indications in your chart, and if I can be helpful to you I shall be glad to do so. You could adapt yourself to astrological writing or to research endeavor, and when you have made further progress you will find you are able to teach the fundamentals of this science. I suggest you keep up the good work you are doing and prepare yourself for the time when our astrological organizations in their continued advancement will be in a position to use the potential ability you possess.

The answer to the question of Mr. C. J. W., Miss C. L. M., will give you some idea of the requirements necessary for the successful study of astrology. The data you send about yourself—November 12, 1897, between six and nine—is not complete enough for me to answer your question specifically. If you will write me again

and inclose the place of your birth and more detailed information concerning the time you were born, I would be in a better position to tell you more about yourself. The general positions of the planets on your date of birth hold promise for you, and I am inclined to judge that you could take up the study of astrology and expect results. This department carries suggestions to students and general information for those of you who are contemplating the study of this science. It is needless for me to say, I am sure, that my helping hand is always extended to every one of you, and if you become perplexed over details in connection with your astrological studies, do not hesitate to write me and ask questions.

Miss M. D. B., born July 4, 1913, eleven forty p. m., Oregon: Your influences at this time are those desiring change and stimulating inconstancy of purpose. You will have to guard against vacillation and uncertainty all your life, and now is a good time for you to begin. The business course you are taking may be irksome and distasteful to you, but it will be valuable in the future, and I think you should continue in this line.

Mr. E. W. C., born August 22, 1872, six ten a. m., Canada; wife born December 16, 1876: Now that you and your wife have already severed your marital combination, I think it would be a mistake to renew your existence together. You are under nebulous influences—that is, a form of self-hypnosis—and you are inclined to view everything in a much more optimistic light than it is. What would probably happen would be that you would renew this bond with hope and idealistic imagination, and you would be much unhappier when the break came later. If you start over again, it would be a wise idea to go into the affair with your eyes wide open and without any foolishness. But I advise you to consider the step very sanely before taking it.

Miss E. L. M., born September 15, 1913, eight p. m.: You are quite right about not belonging in an office, and I think you are equipped for better things. Do not give up that job, however, until you have definitely fitted yourself for the new line. Your chart shows accomplishment through hard work, and when your chance comes it will come suddenly. Your chart shows connection with stage or theatrical enterprises, even motion pictures; but you will have to work through the efforts of some one else or through an underground channel. I do not mean you should do stage work, but written effort in this connection is shown as bringing you definite results. Think this over and write me more of your environment, your chances for study, and about yourself.

You could follow either of these professions, Miss L. M., born April 25, 1916, Pennsylvania, two twenty-five p. m. It is peculiar that you should have hit on the two things you could do so well. Often a person your age, just starting out in life, flounders around uncertainly; yet you have picked law or dancing or music as professions. I think you would probably enjoy the dancing more, but feel you could make a fine woman lawyer, if you want to put in the years of study that is necessary. You have an adaptability for public appearance and will deal with the public in following your occupation. I think lawyers must have a certain amount of showmanship in order to be successful, and you have this indicated in your chart. I suggest you choose law as your work and dancing as your pleasure and hobby.

"Miss Sunshine," you give me quite an assignment. Born July 19, 1906, in Pennsylvania, nine fifty a. m., you have a strong chart, many talents, and you will go far in accomplishing your goal as soon as you decide what to do with yourself. You ask me which will bring you adequate financial return. I suggest scenario or short-story writing as a profession and the study of astrology as a help in understanding character. You will have to choose the best way for preparing yourself for the future because of my unfamiliarity with your environment and resources. I like your chart, and it holds promise for accomplishment. You ask me in what departments of your life the rough influences in 1932 will affect you. Your finances will be limited and the emotional way will be hard. Nineteen-thirty-two will be most unfavorable for love affairs.

Chickie, born October 8, 1909, I certainly do not think you will marry the man born June 24, 1906; at least, not in 1931. You would make a mistake to take a step like this now, when your influences are so adverse, and you would run into many complications. The delay and unhappiness on your part will probably come

through the objection from your parents. Do not be foolish and take a step like this, that would mean misery for you in the future.

Do I think you have anything in common, Miss H. M. T., born August 24, 1910, at eight forty-five a. m., in Rhode Island, with man born March 4, 1903? Well, there is a contact here, but it is not a good one. You are under influences now that lead you to hypnotize yourself into believing everything is grand and you could adjust any circumstance that arises in your contemplated married life. Forget it! You are kidding yourself and storing up a great amount of heartache for the future. When you are finished with these daydeams you are having, you would hit the earth with a heavy thud, and the awakening would be painful.

Miss H. M., born March 30, 1914, around six or seven, Maryland, you should stick to business, at least until you are able to promote the conditions that will enable you to be a successful writer. Your chart shows adaptability for writing, and you are still young and there is plenty of time to build yourself into the writing field. Keep this ambition in mind and combine your efforts with your present job, keeping the idea in mind of writing when economic conditions permit.

Miss C. S., born January 16, 1909, between nine and ten a. m., in Kansas: The less you think about whom you are going to marry, and when, the better you will get along. Your influences for 1931 are directly opposed to dealing with men, and you will find the year most unsatisfactory unless you get something else on your mind immediately. Of course, you know I am not a fortune-teller, and I could not tell you the name of the man you are going to marry. If you concentrate too much on the opposite sex during 1931, you will find trouble and restriction and will probably have to give up the man in the end. You were born under the sign Capricorn, and I suggest you keep in touch with this department of the magazine. You will notice the Capricorn people, especially those born around the time of the month of your date, are having to take inventory of themselves and judge all matters from a sound basis.

Miss L. N., born April 7, 1905, Nebraska, between one and two a. m.: Thanks so much for your interesting and attractive letter. Yes, you are going to make a change in 1931, and you should take steps at once to follow your ambition to become a commercial artist. You are particularly fortunate in being equipped with your artistic technique, and there are many changes in store for you during the coming year, beginning during these spring months. If you have an opportunity to change locations, take it. This will be the beginning of a new life for you.

Your 1931 influences are O. K., Mrs. M. S. P., born March 4, 1883, and you may start the lunch-room and gasoline-station negotiations, if you have not done so already. The spring months are fine for you to start new ventures, and your personal influences become improved as the year advances.

F. L. O., born December 25, 1896, Minnesota: You say you were born "at seven thirty," but you do not say whether a. m. or p. m. The man's date—July 7, 1903—is not a good combination for you, and his 1931 influences are unfavorable. I would not advise you to marry him. You should use your good influences in your cosmetic business, as you will make progress this year. I would suggest you find some one else as the object of your affections, because I cannot see happiness for you in aligning forces with this young man.

Mrs. T. V. G., of Scranton, you did not tell me what kind of work your husband is interested in. I must know this before I can tell you if he will be successful. Also, please send me your birth data.

Mrs. Margaret W., June 28, 1909, please send me your husband's birth data. I must have it in order to answer your question.

**Editor's Note: Questions for this department are answered only through Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine.**

+ + +

# The Friendliest Corner

By MARY MORRIS

Miss Morris will help you to make friends

**Miss Mary Morris, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Friendliest Corner, so that mail can be forwarded.**

**Address Miss Mary Morris, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.**

+ + +

BOARDING-SCHOOL life! Who doesn't thrill to the stories we have heard about it? Everything from out-of-town week-ends to midnight marshmallow roasts! Here are two girls who have known it, lived it, way down in a great, shining, colorful State, where education flourishes in the midst of cattle-grazing plains and historic fighting grounds. Let Lois and Frankie tell you about boarding school and college—the two memorable thrills that belong to youth alone.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We are two eighteen-year-old college girls, attending school in San Antonio, ready to tell interesting things about Texas and boarding-school life to any one who cares to write. We'd especially like to have friends in far-off places.

LOIS AND FRANKIE.

## A factory girl with a big heart.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm looking for worth-while life-long Pals—girls out West, married women, or nice old ladies like my grandmother. I'm a girl of twenty-one, with auburn hair and brown eyes, an optimist, fond of country life. I've worked in a candy factory, but like housework best.

HOME-LOVING AUDREY.

## A daughter of John Bull.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I do wish you would find me some Pals. I'm a woman of fifty, with a married son and daughter and a little grandson. Won't some one write to me? You'll find me a true friend.

ENGLISH RUTH.

## A victim of unemployment.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of twenty-one, interested in tennis, dancing, drama, and art, and now that I've been out of work I've found how few real friends I have. I'm looking to your department to give me real Pals.

JERRY FROM JERSEY.

## All the variety of a March wind.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's a girl of seventeen who'll make her letters interesting! I'm a daughter of that ever-changing month, March, nearly always in a different mood. In one letter I'll be witty and gay; in another I'll be serious. Girls, try me out.

STAR.

### A warm-hearted school-teacher.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a woman of thirty-two, dark-haired and blue-eyed, of a quiet, jolly disposition. I like books and sports, am a teacher, and love home life. I hail from the beautiful and prosperous State of West Virginia. Who'll be my friend?

WEST VIRGINIA'S PAL.

### The State of golf and movie stars.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl eighteen years old, with dark wavy hair and hazel eyes. I live out in California, and my pet sports are swimming and skating. Girls of all ages and sizes, write to me

JANET OF THE WEST.

### A determined bachelor.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a man of twenty-nine, living in Oklahoma, and my plea is somewhat different. I'd like to hear from bachelors of all ages who'll be true and cheerful at all times.

UNMARRIED HUGO.

### Home life in Texas.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman of thirty-three, a native of Louisiana, now living in Texas, away from my people. My hobbies are dancing, fishing, and bridge. Pals, write to me. J. C.'s WIFE.

### Reveling in scenic beauty.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm an eighteen-year-old blonde, living in the State of Washington, with Mount Ranier in my back yard, Puget Sound in front, and oodles of interesting things on both sides. Who'd like to hear about it? NATURE'S DAUGHTER.

### The world's most romantic playground.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman twenty-four years old, with brown eyes and dark hair. I have two children. Having been born and brought up in Honolulu, I can tell many interesting things about the islands. Pals, send your mail across the seas.

MRS. V. B.

### Without a wish in the world.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man of twenty-one, living in the Windy City, waiting for Pals to start our correspondence. I have everything I desire, and am interested in radio announcing and auto racing. Boys, tell me all about yourselves.

GOOD OLD CHICAGO.

### Her business is vacations.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of seventeen, living in Idaho, just ninety-eight miles from Yellowstone National Park. During the summer I run a tourist camp and service station. Girls, hear about the West's vacation land. PATSY OF IDAHO.

### A flying heroine.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a brown-haired girl of twenty-two, and if any of you Pals are interested in flying, I'd be glad to correspond. I'm in the air about as much as I am on the ground, and can tell some interesting experiences. THRILLS.

### Used to country life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a woman of forty-five, looking for some real Pals. I have been a farmer's wife, and just now am a housekeeper, and have my seventeen-year-old son with me. I've traveled a lot and hope to hear from other women everywhere. HOME WOMAN.

### Watch him swing a lariat!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a circus cowboy, nineteen years old, with blond hair and brown eyes. I can tell thrilling stories of circus life, and would like to hear from boys of all ages. ACE.

### The quick pace of city life.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of eighteen, fond of skating and dancing. I live just outside of Newark, and would like some one who lives in a quiet little town to write so I can tell her about a noisy one.

JERSEY KATHLEEN.

### A little European traveler.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of sixteen, and have just returned from a five-month trip to Europe. I'm majoring in art and music in school, and hope to be an artist. Girls, let's get acquainted.

NEW YORK SYLVIA.

### Make a young married foursome.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: We're a young married couple, waiting to join your Corner.

We're interested in sports, movies, dancing, and driving, and hope some day to take a trip West. Won't some young people write to us? We'll be lifelong Pals.

A. AND R.

### Life on the New England coast.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl nearly seventeen, very lonely, as my father just passed away. I live in a Massachusetts fishing village and can tell all about it. Girls, write and help me cheer up.

BRUNETTE.

### A maker of rhythm.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'd like so much to come into your Corner. I'm a girl of twenty with brown eyes and black hair, and I play the piano in a jazz orchestra. Who'll write to me? BLACK-AND-WHITE.

### Call on a sick lady.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman of thirty-one, the mother of a four-year-old boy. Owing to poor health, I am unable to go out much, and would like to pass the lonely hours writing to my Pals. Women everywhere, please be my friends.

STAY-AT-HOME.

### Reaching across a continent.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: How about some boys across the wide, open spaces getting generous with letters? We are two chums, fond of dancing, boating, riding, and golf, and we have a lot of surprises in store for you. Why not collect? RICHARD AND LEXY.

### Bring back her ideals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young widow of eighteen, no longer believing in love, and with an adorable baby boy of a year. I'd like to hear from young girls and mothers everywhere. DISILLUSIONED MOTHER.

### On a far continent.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'd love to have a Pal in America. I'm a woman of twenty-four, living in New Zealand, where my husband has a dairy-produce factory. I'm interested in all kinds of music, and have three prize-winning Pekingese dogs. American girls, let's be friends.

VERA OF AUCKLAND.

### College in the land of youth.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man of twenty-one, going to college down here in Florida. I like football, golf, and tennis, am very lively, but feel strange in this strange town. Boys, write to me, and I'll be a genuine Pal. ARMAND OF TAMPA.

### Soon to be a tourist.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'd be so grateful if you'd squeeze in my plea. I'm a Chicago girl, intending to take a trip by car to Alabama and Florida. I'd like to tell girls all about it, especially those in the Southern States. SOUTHERN-HEARTED DELLA.

### A white-collar office worker.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man, alone in the world, very anxious to make friends. I work in a contractor's office, and hope to find my mail box filled with letters from boys who want a wide-awake Pal.

PENNSYLVANIAN.

### Where movies are made.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a fifteen-year-old brunette, fond of sports, and never miss a chance to go to a dance. I'll tell my Pals all about Hollywood and the movie stars, for I live in Los Angeles and know about them.

VELMA OF CALIFORNIA.

### The life of a waitress.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Won't you send Pals to the rescue? I'm dying of loneliness. I'm a modern maiden of eighteen summers, fond of reading and dancing. I work as a waitress in Buffalo, and I'm ready for a load of mail! FRECKLES.

### Experienced in many lines.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a man of twenty-six, of German and French extraction, now living in Michigan. I have worked on the stage, and am an experienced hotel man and photograph tinter. I'd like a Pal who would stay my Pal through thick and thin.

CLEAN-CUT JIMMIE.

### The happy side of marriage.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl who has seen twenty-one years in this old world, have been married to the one and only for six years, and have a darling boy and girl. My husband and I are modern to the finger tips,

and even with all the cares of everyday life we are cheerful. Young and old, don't forget to write. ROMANTIC FRANCES.

### She haunts the library.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm just another almost-eighteen-year-old blonde with dark-blue eyes. I'm a regular bookworm, and read everything that looks interesting. I also like music, tramping through the woods, and drawing, and I'm anxious to write to girls everywhere. GEORGIA BLONDE.

### A fascinating hobby.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a boy of seventeen, love music, dancing, and skating, and make a special hobby of collecting butterflies. Boys, write to me, and we can talk it over.
KENT OF CLIFFSIDE.

### From a cold and beautiful land.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Just another plea for Pals! I'm a married girl of twenty-three, and hail from Alaska. I'll tell you all about life up here in the frozen North.
ALASKA WIFE.

### Thirsting for the thrill of far places.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young man in my early twenties, living in Maine. I love romance and adventure, and hope to satisfy my dream of travel soon. Won't all you boys interested in sports and travel write to me?
NOMAD.

### At home on the stage.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young girl, just past sixteen, with brown hair and blue eyes. I'm a singer and dancer on the stage, and have been for the past twelve years. Who wants a real trouper for a Pal?
SINGING ROSE.

### The magnet of the West.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Would any one like to correspond with a widow who is sad and alone in the world? I'm forty-five years old and blond, and I'd be especially interested in Pals from the West, as I have a wild calling in my heart for it. LONELY ONE.

### A man in the backwoods.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a man of twenty, stationed way back in the hills. Letters would do a great deal to ease my lonely life, and I'm hoping to hear from every one, especially those who are temperamental and artistically inclined. Boys, please send me heaps of letters. I need them.
THE BLUE ANGEL.

### A sit-by-the-fire girl.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a married woman, nearly twenty-four years old, and have a darling son two years old. I love to entertain, and am interested in everything pertaining to home and friends. I promise long, newsy letters. CHATTERBOX.

### Left high and dry.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Who craves a true-blue Pal, one who has just left the navy? I miss my old shipmates, and hope to find fifty-fifty friendship in your Corner. I'm of French and Spanish descent, twenty-seven years old, and will answer all who write.
THE MAN IN BLUE.

### Longing for the fields of France.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I have Pen Pals, too? I'm a little French girl, nineteen years old, and very lonely. I'd particularly like to hear from the Old Country.
BIG-CITY GIRL.

# The Friend In Need

## Department

Conducted By

**Laura Alston Brown**

DOESN'T it seem sometimes as if it's the wicked who get the big end of things in this world, while all the lovely, warm-hearted people have nothing but slurs and slams as their reward? I can't imagine a selfish, shallow woman supporting a wastrel husband for three years as Marion did, hanging on vainly in the hope that he may yet change.

But let's look a little more closely before we all decide to change into selfish, shallow women. Was it Marion's warm-heartedness which led to her suffering? Wasn't it rather her inability to say no and mean it? Her inability to face the facts as they really are? Her inability to distinguish between those sacrifices one must make for love and those rights which no self-respecting woman ever gives up for any cause, those rights which are the essence of individual existence?

Dear Mrs. Brown: I met my husband when I was fifteen—I am nineteen now—and he was everything then that any girl could ask for. We were married when I had turned sixteen. I was really too young, but at that time you could not convince me of it.

One month after we had been married, he went out West and stayed there for two months, leaving a good job. I hadn't a cent, and I lived with my mother. She has been wonderful to me, helping me out when I needed her and never asking questions. One week after he had gone, I took a little baby to keep. I was paid a small sum for that, and did the housework at home.

Two months after my husband left, he came back with sixty dollars in his pocket, without a job. He was then out of work for six months. In the meantime, I had procured a position in the city. We lived at home with my mother, as I did not make enough to keep the both of us.

But when mother needed money herself my husband did not even try to look for work until my father decided it was time he did something. They had words, and the next week, to everybody's surprise, my husband had a job and insisted that we move to the city.

He then worked a few months, but not steady. If he thought he needed an afternoon off, well, he just took it. And if I said a thing, I was told to keep my mouth shut. We were living in one room, eating and sleeping in there, and it was not very comfortable after having been raised in a large home; but I never complained. And when he would fly into an awful rage just because some little thing didn't suit him, I was so frightened. If I answered back, he would hit me, so I found out that the best way to get along was not to say a thing.

After a month or two of this hard labor, he played sick. The doctor I took him to said there was nothing wrong with him, but that it would be advisable to get out his tonsils. I worked like crazy trying to get the money to pay for the operation. After it was all over, I had a nervous breakdown, and was home from work for four weeks, in which time we nearly starved to death.

When I was not fit to be on my feet, I went back to work, trying to make a living for two people and not making enough for one to live on.

He was out of work until the next spring. If he had tried to look for work, I would not have minded; but he would go up to the pool room and spend all his time up there.

In the meantime, I had started work in a new position, with a bigger salary and a promise of advancement if I worked hard. I went to night school to fit myself for it, and I am now keeping their books. My hus-

band had gotten his old job back, and I tried to save some money. I thought we might be coming into the clear at last.

But that hope was soon shattered. When I came back after my holiday—the first in two years—he had left his job. I don't know how we'd have gotten along then if mother hadn't helped. She furnished three rooms and again permitted us to move in with her.

My husband refused several good jobs at this time. He either didn't care for the work or he was too proud or it was too great a strain. Always some excuse, so he could lie in bed until noon every day, waiting for me to come home and get his meals and keep the place clean.

All that winter we lived like that. He'd get mad if I didn't have costly meals ready on the minute—although I was working and he wasn't—and I'd be too weary and sick at heart to argue with him or care very much what he said. But he hit me and cut my face one day when he was sore, and that was too much for my people. Father put him out of the house.

He went back to the city and got deep into debt taking rooms, buying himself new clothes, and having a general good time. I didn't want to go with him, but he threatened to do all sorts of terrible things if I didn't. Then he turned so nice to me that I began again to hope that he had changed.

The new attitude lasted only until he had me in his power once more. After I went back, it was the same old story; we are right back to the place where we started.

Mrs. Brown, if he were ill and unable to work I wouldn't say a word; I'd work my fingers to the bone to keep him if it were necessary. But he's strong and healthy. I've been trying to persuade myself for three and a half years that he might change, but in my heart I know he never will.

It isn't as if I were ugly. I'm popular and make friends easily. I keep myself looking neat and attractive with the clothes my mother and brothers are always giving me. It hurts my feelings to take their gifts, but it would hurt them worse for me to refuse. Last week, when I went home, my kid brother gave me a pair of hose he had bought me out of his savings from his chickens. They are the best family a girl ever had, and I wouldn't hurt them for anything.

What shall I do, Mrs. Brown? Must I go on forever? There isn't any chance for improvement, and I'll never have the things every woman wants. I'll never have the chance for motherhood, for I couldn't bring children into the world to go through the same sufferings I've had to bear for three long years. MARION.

You didn't have to wait three and a half years before you stopped to think, Marion. I suppose it was because you were so young that you didn't have the courage to acknowledge your mistake before, but that loving family you describe should certainly have had the courage and the initiative to do it for you.

I can't understand why they let you go back this last time. But, of course, I can't understand why they ever consented in the first place. It was weakness on their part to let you marry at sixteen. Even if it meant alienating you for a while, they should have refused firmly.

You ought to go back to that family, Marion; they must be suffering even more than you at the thought of your life with this loafer. Go back, regain your strength, and tell your husband that when he has held one job for a whole year straight and can show you a respectable bank balance, you'll give him another chance. Make sure he knows that if you ever come back again it won't be as a part-time wife. You'll have just one job, matrimony; and he'll be expected to do all the earning.

If he has one spark of manhood left, child, this is a better way to bring it out than your softness. Men work better when there is a definite prize to be won by their labors.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: As you seem to think that there is always unhappiness and regret for those who marry young, I want you to hear from a young married girl who certainly disagrees with you.

Up to the time that I was seventeen, I had friends galore, and as many dates as I wanted. I went to dances, parties, and had a good time in the right way. The bunch I ran with were peppy and full of fun.

Then, in the midst of my gayety, I met and fell in love with the man of my dreams. He was eight years older than I, and had seen quite a bit of this old world. He had had his fling, the same as the rest; but was

ready to settle down and wanted me for his sweetheart and wife.

We were madly in love. So we were married in two weeks. I was seventeen; he was twenty-five.

We will soon celebrate our fifth wedding anniversary, and we are happier now than ever. Who wouldn't be, with a darling baby girl, two years old, whom we adore, to cheer us up when things don't seem too rosy? We haven't much money, but we do get by, and we are happy in having a perfect little family, so we manage to be comfortable and have our good times, too.

Mrs. Brown, I can truthfully say that neither my husband nor I has ever trifled one bit. Once or twice a week we get some one to keep the baby while we go to a show; then when I have a chance to play bridge with a bunch of married girls, my husband keeps the baby that night. When he wants to go out with a few friends for an evening, I ask a girl or two to come over to stay with baby and me. We stay at home and read, talk, or have some of our friends over on other nights.

Of course, we have our little spats, but make up right away and are sorry for what we said to each other.

I consider myself lucky to have found a man so good, kind, and loving to me. He calls me his little "flapper wife" to his friends, and tells people that he thinks I am a wonderful mother and wife to have started in so young.

He has satisfied me, for he is such a dear, and I know I love him and baby better than anything. Our happiness is going to last, too. It is the thing we want most, and when you want something *badly enough,* then you'll get it, if it isn't unreasonable.

LITTLE FLAPPER WIFE.

Let me tell you a story, dear; I think it will illustrate my attitude better than any long explanation.

I walk through a park almost daily to get to my home, and one day last winter, just after a cold snap had broken, I noticed two boys with ice skates idling near the almost deserted lake which is used for skating when it's cold enough. The ice seemed smooth enough, but the red ball, the signal for wary skaters, was not up.

The bigger one was sneering at his friend because the youngster refused to take a chance on the ice. He himself wasn't afraid to risk it. I watched him buckle on his skates and set out on his foolhardy quest for enjoyment.

I suppose, to give this story a real moral, I should make him fall through the ice and be saved only by the coolness of the little boy who didn't take a chance. But, though the fool rushed in where angels would fear to tread, he got away with it that time. Nothing happened; he came off safely enough, and he certainly had the laugh on the little fellow.

Later in the week I noticed the big fellow near the lake again. The red ball was still down; but, having gotten away with his recklessness once, he thought he knew it all. This time he didn't, though. He broke through the ice, and though the police were able to fish him out, he got a thorough wetting and probably was laid up for several days. The very next day it turned real cold again, and though I noticed the other youngster skating merrily around, I didn't see his brave friend anywhere. I suppose he was home nursing a cold as the result of his exposure.

Early marriages are certainly as foolhardy as skating on thin ice. There is nothing to lose by waiting until it's safe to go ahead. And although some people do seem to escape the consequences, the wise person doesn't take unnecessary chances against tremendous odds.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: May I say a few words to Lucky? Her argument brought back vivid memories of my school days, when I felt much the same way she does now.

My dear Lucky, how very wrong your ideas are! I, too, was popular at sixteen. The honor of the class presidency was also mine, and having been gifted with a pleasing personality, good looks, and, above all, a kind heart, I certainly did not find it hard to make friends.

It was at that time that I met Ray and we fell in love. To me he was the most wonderful person living. We were soon keeping steady company. I gave up all my friends, and he did likewise.

My friends soon took it for granted that both Ray and I wished to be left alone, so

all the invitations that had formerly been extended to us ceased to come. But I didn't mind. I was so happy in my love for Ray.

We were together every single night, and so it went on for two years.

My parents objected to our romance because I was too young. Mother pleaded with me with tears in her eyes, but to no avail. I loved him, and that was all that mattered.

We became engaged, but neither his nor my people would consent to an early marriage. And so things went on until, one night, we both lost our heads.

No doubt, Lucky dear, you'll say, "It was their own fault; they could have prevented it from happening!" But angels have fallen before, and youth is not so clever, after all.

Do you know, Lucky, things changed after that. Six months later we parted, and we are both glad of it. We are good friends, but that is all.

What did I have left after the breaking of our engagement? All my old friends had drifted away, and I was completely disillusioned. Mother had been right, and I certainly did not know it all.

I decided then to leave home, and so here I am in a fairly large city, at the age of twenty-three, and considered a very popular young lady. I have hosts of friends and admirers, and I am happy.

I shall never forget that one mistake, but I am trying to make up for it by living cleanly now.

I am working and earning a fine salary, which enables me to share a sweet little three-room apartment with my girl chum and dress smartly. Perhaps, one of these days, I will meet the man of my dreams.

Remember, Lucky, your mind to-day is not what your mind will be at twenty-two.

You say that only light-headed and insincere people are infatuated, and that it seldom lasts for any length of time. Again you are wrong. Why, some of the greatest persons this world has known have been infatuated for quite a good length of time, only to find, when the one and only came along, that they had been mistaking infatuation for love. Sometimes it is quite a problem to know the difference.

Only a few more words now. Please, for goodness' sake, have other friends. Don't give up all. You may be wanting them some day.

And wait. Don't marry too young. Twenty-three or four is about right.

TWENTY-THREE.

Well, that's the reverse side of the medal. Twenty-three took a chance on this ice and fell through. It was a wholly unnecessary risk.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Why can't Bonnie see that the husband who has loved and cared for her through sickness and health loves her better than the boy husband who gave her up so easily.

I, too, was married at sixteen to a boy of nineteen. He wouldn't work and support me, so we separated, and I was soon free. But I always loved him.

Nine years later he came back and asked me to become his wife again, to start again in a furnished room, on one hundred dollars a month. I couldn't work or go anywhere while he worked, or drive the car—he was to carry the keys. In other words, he was to be the jailer.

At twenty-five, I saw him as he really was—a jealous, selfish, mean-dispositioned man. No doubt he loved me in his way, but he killed even the respect I had for him. He doesn't seem like any one I ever knew.

Now I am married to one of the best men I ever knew. After six years of married life, I feel the same way. I was sick all last winter, and he was so kind and gentle with me. That's when a man shows how much he cares for you.

When we married, our home was furnished and we had our own new car, not a cent due on either of them. We took a long trip on our honeymoon, and we have taken a long trip every summer since in our car. We take his father and my father and mother with us. So, you see, we try to make others happy, too.

We belong to the church and clubs and go to shows. We are always together in the evening.

I drive our car and go anywhere I want during the day. We are both popular with our crowd and have lots of company. We go out a great deal, too. Our friends say we are too happy for it to last, but here's hoping it always will last.

That one mistake made my girlhood sad, but I am—or believe I am—as happy now as any human can be, and my hubby says the same.

NO LONGER BLIND.

Yes, twenty-five does see more clearly than sixteen. The youngster is taken in by the tinsel surface, but we oldsters know that all which glitters isn't gold.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I scarcely know how to put into words what I have to say so that you will get a fair view of both sides.

One is so apt to give an entirely selfish point of view.

I am twenty years old, have been married for a year and a half, but we have no children. My husband is twenty-seven, a barber, running his own business.

I am a stenographer, but am not working, because work is terribly scarce. So I am dependent on my husband. If I weren't, perhaps things would be better.

I am the youngest child in our family and, I guess, used to having my own way. But I really do try to give in at least half the time. Berne is his mother's pet, also, and is used to running roughshod over any one he is peeved with, although he is kind-hearted and would do most anything for one he liked.

His parents are extremely narrow-minded and selfish. He seems to be the same. That is, he can't see any one else's side at all, and cares nothing for their feelings.

We both joined the church a few months ago, and are deep in it. We have given up everything of the world and don't regret it.

But we seem to have so much trouble. At times we get along well and are real happy; then something comes up which causes a quarrel, usually something very petty. I guess I am irritable and snappy.

Berne is dreadfully lax about hanging up his clothes. He always leaves them lying around, instead of putting them where they belong. I am tidy and a clean housekeeper. When I tell him I think he could put them away just as easily, he gets mad and says something insulting.

I used to just cry when he did that, but I have got so now that I snap right back. Then he pouts for a couple of hours.

I can see where I am at fault, usually, and will apologize. But he always says he hasn't done or said anything to be sorry for. I am willing to take my share of the blame and tell him so; but if I don't take the entire blame, things go worse.

I am forgiving and very affectionate, but I never get a word of love, and never a kiss except as he leaves for work and comes home. Perhaps I am too romantic. Am I? I hate to think of leaving our sweetheart days behind.

I have threatened to leave a few times, but when it comes to a show-down I can't do it, for I love him. But something has to be done soon. My parents are in another State, and I have no relative here except a brother. Besides, I am too proud to let on to any of them. My allowance is small, too, and I can't find work of any description. I think if I were independent, things would be better.

Mrs. Brown, if you can piece this together and get any sense or meaning out of it, I would certainly appreciate your honest opinion. If it all comes of my being too babyish, selfish, irritable, and critical, please tell me. It nearly breaks my heart to see our home wrecked.

Can you suggest anything I can do to persuade my husband to coöperate with me and try to overcome these truly sinful and heart-breaking occurrences in our home? I have tried to conquer my temper and my other weaknesses, but I don't seem to make any headway.

I am busy all the time—church work, Bible study, music, fancy work, and housework. The trouble I mentioned about the clothes is only one incident out of many.

TROUBLED.

Well, my dear, neither crying nor quarreling is going to get you far. The thing to do when a man loses his temper is to laugh him out of it. Use your sense of humor and make him use his. More successful marriages are based on laughter than on a mystical communion and understanding.

You have a tendency to stress form too much. What if he does refuse to say right out he's sorry after a quarrel? He's probably really ashamed deep down, and that's why he doesn't want to go on talking about it. He'd rather forget it, which is a much healthier thing to do. When you start rehashing a quarrel you bring all the bitterness on again.

Forget it all, just as your husband does; what difference do the actual words make? If he treats you just a little more considerately, you can see for yourself that he's really sorry. The outward form doesn't really matter.

And it's the same with the clothing. What if he does leave his coat over a chair for an hour or two? If a man can't be comfortable in his own home, where is he to find comfort? If you keep your house clean, swept, and dusted and mopped, the world won't come to an end just because one or two things aren't on the shelves you designed for them. That's not dirt; learn to disregard it. Your husband's love and hap-

piness are far more precious to you than the exact apple-pie order of a house with such grim neatness it reminds one of a prison or a hospital.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I first met Jack, my sweetheart, in our last year at high school. We were introduced by a mutual friend. He liked me in a friendly sort of way, and one day he asked me to accompany him to a party.

I was only seventeen then—I am eighteen now—and I thought I was a "big-time" girl. That is, I always was the leader in my crowd, doing things no others would dare. But at the party I went to with Jack I acted very sedate, because I knew no one but him and his boy friend, and no one could have criticized my actions. Jack himself was always dignified and reserved.

A week later I went on another party with him, but this time his other boy friend was there, and I went for a ride with Gordon while the rest were inside eating. We came back in about an hour.

When I came in again Jack did not say a word, and I thought he was not angry. But when he took me home he very politely handed back the ring I was letting him wear at his request.

I saw him again the next day, and I acted as though nothing untoward had happened. The next night he came over. Neither of us mentioned the party.

Of course, I wasn't going steady with him, and I had other dates for dances and parties and dinners. I always told Jack about these other dates and bragged about what I did. But, Mrs. Brown, I never, never did anything really wrong.

Then I went to another party with Jack, and Gordon was there. This time I was dancing and cutting up with Gordon all night, and I forgot all about Jack; but when he took me home he made me feel about as small and mean as a grasshopper. I could see he was hurt, by his attitude and the way he talked to me.

I pretended that I didn't give a rap; but, honestly, there was a lump in my throat as I said good-by to him. I thought that episode had written finis to our friendship, but I was wrong.

I did not see Jack again until the middle of the summer, when I accidentally bumped into him one hot, sultry afternoon. He had his bathing suit with him, and he asked me if I wanted to go swimming. I went, of course, and we were overjoyed to see each other.

I knew then that I loved him. I couldn't tell him, and I didn't know what to do. But, anyway, I could tell he still liked me a lot.

And then, one night, we were sitting in my living room. My parents were in bed and we had the door shut. He started to pet, and I allowed him to do as he pleased, just because I loved him. When he went home I wondered if I should have let him do it.

The day following this I received a special-delivery letter in which he denounced me scathingly. I couldn't look a person straight in the face all day. My chin would quiver, and it was all I could do to keep from crying. I was going to reply, but instead I just tore the letter up.

That day we moved into a new house. Several weeks later my best girl friend came over and told me that Jack had been searching all over for me, and had been burning up her telephone wires trying to find out where I had moved to. She'd refused to tell him, of course; but I told her to give him my number.

He called that evening, and beseeched me to let him come over. When I consented he said, "So long, sweetheart!" I was deliriously happy.

When he arrived, we took a stroll in a near-by park, where he told me he loved me and asked me to forgive him for the letter. I told him I had loved him since our meeting that summer afternoon. I suppose the squirrels and robins and sparrows in the trees thought we were daffy, because we couldn't stop hugging each other. There were tears of joy in my eyes.

My happiness lasted until I found out, from a very reliable source, that every time Jack had been on a party during our misunderstanding he had been dead drunk, and that he had been out with really bad girls. When I asked him about it, he confirmed it. He had never taken a drink in his life until the second time he returned my ring. I nearly cried when he told me.

I could have overlooked that, but I have gone on several parties with him recently which were all given by a crowd I know doesn't drink. You can imagine my shame when Jack passed out at the last one. Somebody drove us home, and he sobered up a little. Then I told him how ashamed I was of him, and with tears streaming down my face I ran up the steps and into the house.

He called the next day and told me he was very sorry. He promised never to drink again, and I believed him. But he kept his word only two weeks.

Last night we went out, and he told me

that on last Saturday night he was drunk. Well, I don't know what to do now, because he said he couldn't stop even for me, and that I might as well face it.

But when I think of the time when we'll be married I cry. How can I marry a drunkard? I've told him he can injure himself that way, but he says he doesn't care.

He loves me, I know, and we are never so happy as when we are together. I am almost positive that he has given up those other girls, but how can I make him stop drinking? I can't send him away, because he'd only go to the dogs then. When I think of all the days to come, with no Jack near me, honestly, I can't even bear to think of it.

LISA.

Unfortunately, child, you can either give him up and forget him or you can marry him with your eyes open to the fact that he isn't able to control his desire for drink. You can't do anything else, because the age of miracles is past.

This much I can tell: If you give him up, there will be months of heartache, sleepless nights, and tasteless days. But after those months you'll be able to face the world a free woman, ready to love where you can give respect.

If you hold onto him, if you refuse to face the inevitable, you'll have a lifetime of such misery as no one but the wife of a drunkard can imagine. Weigh it well; a few months against fifty years, if you last that long under the conditions you'll have to face.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: What got me to write this letter is that I have noticed that nearly every letter you print says, "I smoke, drink, and pet."

Now, I am a young girl of seventeen, and I can get the fellows without doing that. Girls, don't you understand that a fellow is after all he can get? I don't mean every single one, but most of them are. And I don't blame the guys. If the girl is foolish enough to give a fellow what he wants—well, I don't think much of the girl. I read Hard As Nails' letter. Well, why shouldn't the boys test the girl? They have to try her out to see what kind of a girl she is. A fellow doesn't want a girl who has been handled by every man, kissed, and petted. I should say not.

He wants a girl who is clean, respected, and if you pet, that brings you to ruin. A fellow will have a good time out of you, and then after he is all through he won't think much of you. I don't blame him.

Some say it is as much the girl's fault as the fellow's. If the girl wouldn't be so easy, then the fellow wouldn't bother.

I know just what you think—that I am a kid. Well, I have more brains than some of you dumb-bells. I am popular in a nice way, go out with a nice crowd of girls, and am considered good-looking. Yes, a fellow has tried to get funny with me, more than once; but should I give in just because *they* want to pet? I should say not! I've got pride.

TORONTO LUPE.

Why shouldn't the boys test out every girl they meet, Lupe? The answer to that is, why should they? What authority has constituted them the judge and jury for every feminine soul they come across? According to your theory, every girl should test every man she meets, too. Or perhaps you're one of the contingent who thinks that a man, or rather any creature in trousers, is such a treasure it would be blasphemy for any woman to look this magnificent gift horse in the mouth.

Let me tell you something, child. Any man who can't tell what a girl is from her manner and conversation is too dull for a girl to bother with. That's the way women have always found out what a man is like; that is, women with perception and fastidiousness.

And did it ever occur to you, my dear, in connection with these self-constituted judges, that if the girl is soiled by handling, the man can't help having his own hands dirtied in the process of "testing" her? Perhaps you think that is a noble thing to do in the cause of science. There are some women—and I'm afraid you're going to grow up into one of them—to whom a man can do no wrong.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a girl of eighteen, and I am very much in love with a young man of twenty-one. But although he has told me he loves me, I know he does not.

He goes out with other young girls, and when he has nowhere to go he calls on me.

I never say anything to him, because I love him dearly; and if anything happened to him, I think I would die. I have been out with many different types of fellows, but none of them has come up to him. Will you please tell me what to do? Should I tell him that I know of his running around with other girls, or should I just keep silent? Do you think he really loves me?

How can I win his love if he doesn't love me, or do you think I can never win it?

FROM HEARTBROKEN BUDDY.

What a poor sort of town you must live in! This young man is a liar—you say yourself you don't believe he's truthful in his protestations of love—he's a philanderer, and yet the other young men must be even worse if he's the best you've found. What will all the poor girls who inhabit that part of the country do? It doesn't seem quite fair.

It's letters like this one which make me take almost kindly to sentiments such as Pepper expresses.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: After reading so many letters from girls and women, I thought I'd like to express my opinion of it all.

Mrs. Brown, don't you think most of this trouble is mainly the girls' fault? They are so soft and yielding, a man has only to look at them once and they're all ga-ga. I know; I've seen them.

I can't understand why a girl, if she has any gumption at all, will run after a man. Any one with an ounce of sense knows that no man will think very much of a girl who persists in chasing him.

They say, "How will I win him?" Bah! If he wants to be won, he'll do the winning. Your cue is to wait, and if he shows no signs, let pride come to your rescue and give it all up.

I've never fallen in love; what's more, I don't want to. Oh, yes, I am engaged. But you'll see no soft, sentimental little fool. Treat 'em hard, that's me, and, Mrs. Brown, they like it. PEPPER.

One does find it easier to respect a cat which sinks its claws into any one who has the stupidity to step on it than it is to learn to care for the lowly worm. We human beings, both male and female, like backbone.

+ + +

Mae and June: Maybe they think you're like the rest of your crowd. Why travel with people like that? One Who Wants to Do Right: I don't see why he should have the fruits of matrimony and the bachelor's freedom as well. If he had to choose, perhaps he would wake up. Mary M. of Maryland: Only a lawyer can answer that problem.

A. L. M.: If you had a choice between ice cream and vinegar, which would you take? Why choose to go on mooning and being blue when you can just as well be happy? Bob, Pat, and Don: Thanks for your letter. If you want Pen Pals write Miss Morris your full names and addresses, and a description of yourselves and your interests.

Lonesome Peggy: He probably just got tired. Forget him. Mooning Roslyn: Have you ever thought of joining a club where the young folks are more interested in athletics than in petting? Dizzy Smiles: He couldn't have cared very much or he'd have had more faith. Keith's Sweetheart: I think your mother has done enough damage. Stick to your guns.

**Mrs. Brown will be glad to solve in these pages problems on which you desire advice. Your letters will be regarded confidentially and signatures will be withheld.**

**Although Mrs. Brown receives more letters than she can possibly print in the department, she answers all the others by mail. So, lay your problem before her with the knowledge that it will have her full attention.**

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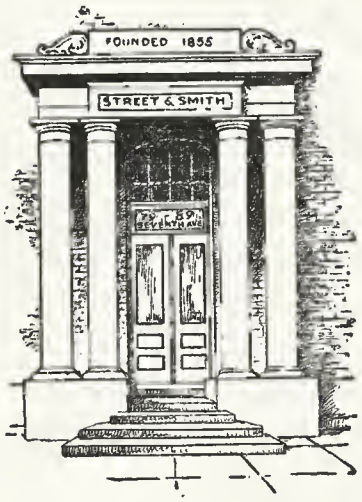


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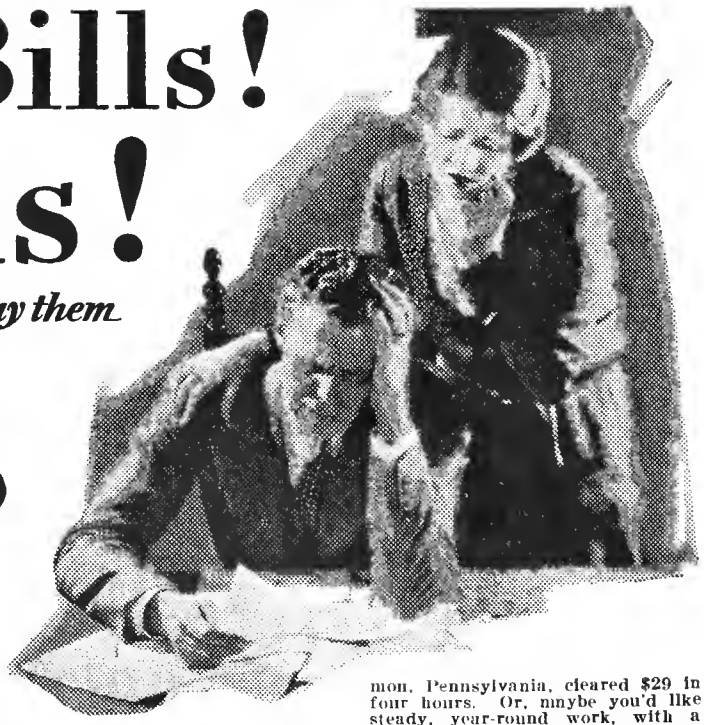

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Would $72 n week take away your worry abor hills? Would $10, $12. $1[illegible] smooth the way for you? T[illegible] listen to me, my friend. I have something of importance to sny to you. I know of hundreds of men and women who were once in the same posltion you mny be in today — men out of a joh — widows wlth chlldren to support — honest, conscientious people wbo needed more money to keep things going. Did they glve up? Not on your life! I'll tell you whnt they did. They accepted a wonderful opportunlty to make money—more money than they ever made in their life before—the very same offer I'm ready to make to *you* right now.

### Bills All Paid—And Money In the Bank

H. T. Lester, of Massachusetts, ls one of them. And this is what he writes me: "My bank book shows that *in 25 days* 1 deposited $100.35 —that ls, *over and above my living expenses.*" Thlnk of it! *Bills all paid* and *over $100 clear cash* ln the bank in less than a month. Mrs. Edgar Crouthnmel, of Pennsylvanln, ls another. She got $89.72 for one week's work. And then there is G. W. Tubbs, of California. He was out of n joh for three months. But he nccepted my offer and now often mnkes as mucb as $20 in one day. Are these people worrying ahout hills? And I could mention hundreds of others just like them to show you the amazing possibilities of my propositlon.

### You Don't Need Capital or Experience

Is there any reason why *you* can't well? Let me tell you why ik you can. I do business ln section of the country. I need people everywhere to help me. And I have a place for *you* right now in your very locality. You don't have to invest any cnpital. You don't need any special training or experience. Mrs. Frank Young, Minnesota, was formerly an office worker, making $50 a month. Now, she is a widow with two children. Yet, with my proposition she often makes as much as $25 in a single day. Henry W. Yenger, of Minnesota, dldn't have any experience either. But he had bills to pay and needed money. With the opportunity 1 gave him he made a profit of $17 one Saturday afternoon.

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I'll tell you, as 1 told them, the few simple thlngs you need to do. I'll furnish everything you need to have. And you'll be your own boss —work when you please. You couldn't imagine finer, more delightful work that pnys such big money for the time you devote.

Mayhe a few extra dollars n week would help you. I'll be surprised if you don't mnke $25 to $35 a week in spare time. L. R. Solomon, Pennsylvania, cleared $29 in four hours. Or, mnybe you'd like steady, year-round work, with a chance to have an income of $72 a week. Sol Korenblit, New York, does hetter than that. He snys he averages $110 n week regularly. Whatever you want, here's your opportunity to get it.

### Send No Money—Just Mail Coupon

Let's stop worrying ahout hlls. Let's get them pald—*quick*. Tben, let's get money ahead; have the thlngs you need and wnnt; enjoy life. I'm ready to give you the chance. I'm ready to make you the very same offer thnt has brought $15 and more ln a day to llterally thousands of people. You don't need to walt for nnything. You can start making money right away. 1 don't care who you are or where you llve, it's worth your while to find out about thls amazing offer. Mall the coupon and I'll give you fncts that will open your eyes. And you don't obligate yourself or risk one penny. You have everything to gnin. So don't walt. Mall the coupon—NOW.

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